



# The Modern Chesterfield

*A Selection of Chesterfield's Letters to His Son*

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Edited by Robert McMurdy



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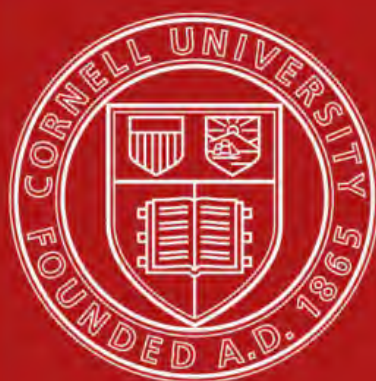
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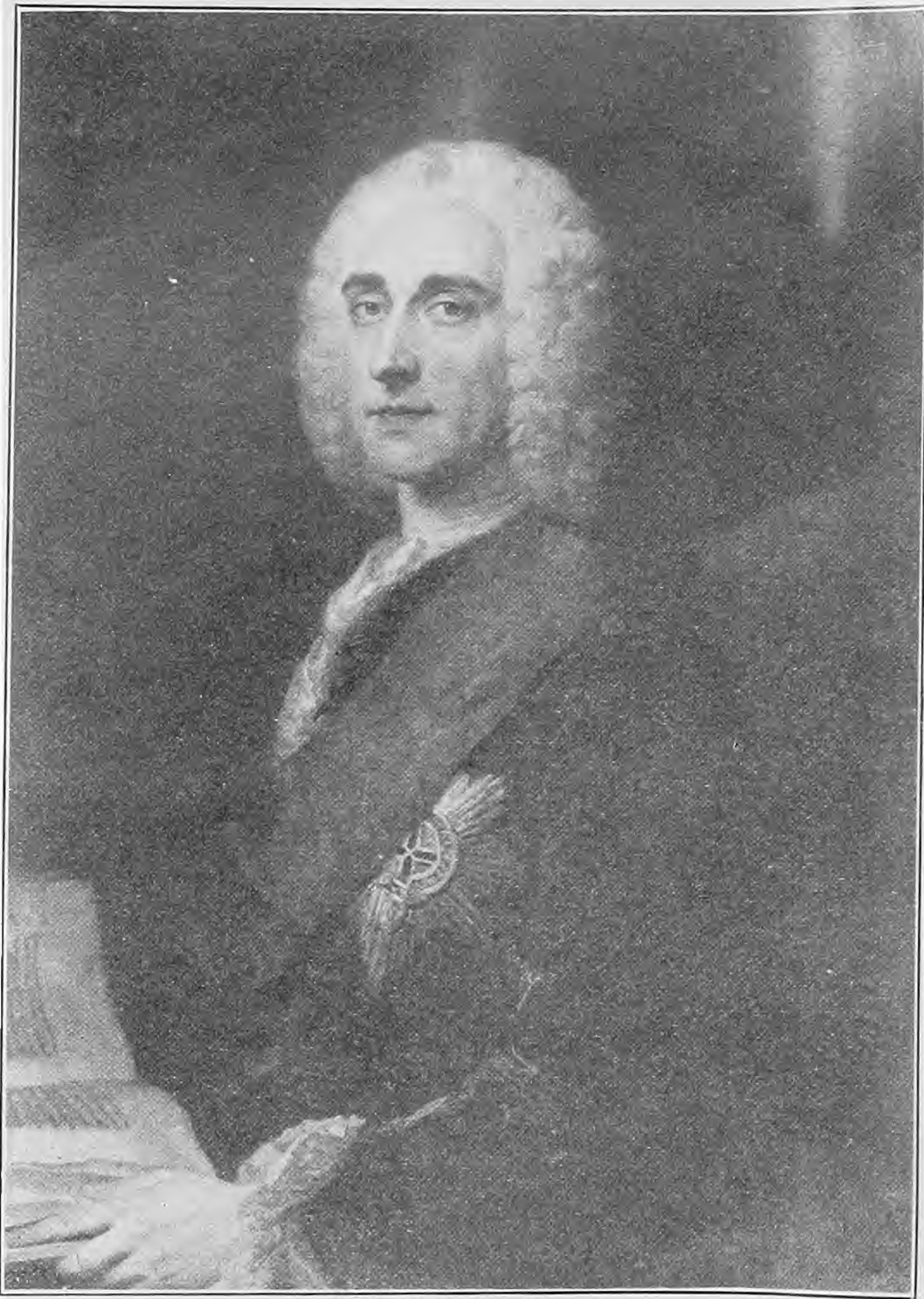
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PHILIP DORMER STANHOPE, EARL OF CHESTERFIELD



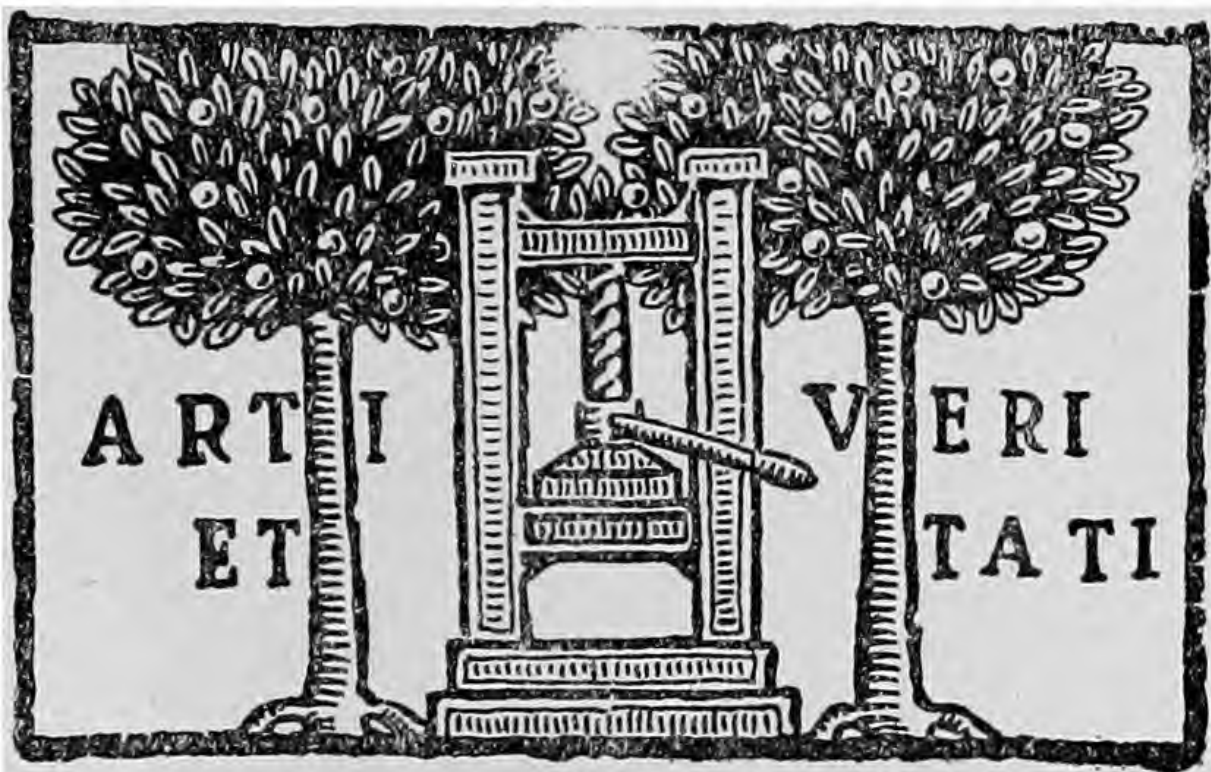






# THE MODERN CHESTERFIELD

*A Selection of* CHESTERFIELD'S  
LETTERS TO HIS SON  
*Edited by* ROBERT McMURDY  
*Author of "The Upas Tree."*



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THE GORHAM PRESS. BOSTON, U. S. A.



TO THE BOYS—  
YOUNG AND OLD—LITTLE AND BIG—  
EVERYWHERE





*With books of old men, and sleep,  
And hours of dreamy ease, to creep  
Into oblivion sweet of life,  
Its agitations and its strife.*

—*Greenwood's Horace.*

*Copied by Lord Chesterfield in the original Latin upon the frieze of  
his library.*



## PREFACE

Inspiration leaps forward, now and then, a century at a bound; little grains of thought long unheeded, like grains of wheat released from their long hibernation in the winding sheet of a mummy, spring into animation, for kindred mysteries envelop the principle of life and the soul of a thought.

This edition of the famous letters was inspired by words of Dr. Johnson, written so long ago that the United States of America was at the time declaring her Independence. The original edition had just been published, and some comment was due from the choleric Doctor, notwithstanding his aversion to their author. History has embalmed his words:

Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son, I think, might be made a very pretty book. Take out the immorality, and it should be put into the hands of every young gentleman.

In the hope of realizing this prediction and meeting this criticism, whatever is unwholesome has been eliminated and that deemed unimportant has been omitted; some careless writing natural in casual letters never intended for publication has been edited; and a few passages from other writings of the same author have been added, together with original matter suggested by an extended, sympa-

thetic, and affectionate association with young men. But care has been exercised to preserve the flavor of the style, with its essential characteristic of condensed diction, suggesting that of Bacon, who is quoted more often than any other writer. Accuracy of reproduction has thus been sacrificed to the interest of growing manhood, following Dr. Maty's precept that it ought to be the object of every writer to promote the benefit of mankind.

Schopenhauer would have characterized such a plan as *impertinent*—an arrogating term, by the way, imposed on us by caste. If, however, the edition proves beneficial to the young, the result will justify the plan, no matter how impertinent. Helpful guides to the adolescent, written from a parent's angle, are rare, and while in their present form the letters are still subject to the objection of aristocratic view-point, they follow good ethical standards, embody a useful scheme of social and intellectual development, and are believed worthy to be "put into the hands of every young gentleman."



## INTRODUCTION

Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, was born in 1694 and died in 1773.

Nature had designed him for leisure; at all events, he was indolent. But he was ambitious. And the two characteristics were ever contending, pride in general being the master.

Admonished that lying late in bed would hinder his rise in the world, he acquired the habit of comparatively early rising, and steadfastly maintained it, to the great benefit not only of his career but of his health.

He had the good fortune, also, of having set before him in early youth the advantages of oratory as the surest and quickest means of making a mark, and pursued the study with resolute determination. But even oratory has its drawbacks; Chesterfield violated the law of the land by sitting as a Member of Parliament before attaining his majority, an offence which would have passed unchallenged had he not taunted fate by taking part in debate. Made aware of his peril, his valor failed him and he ingloriously fled, but when time removed his disability he returned from exile, and safely resumed his seat. Later he entered the House of Lords, the "Hospital of Incurables," as he styled it, where he earned distinction as a master of oratorical graces to so great a degree that he was called the British Cicero. Although one of the acknowledged

leaders of the Lords, his chronicle of positive achievements seems to be limited to the adoption by England of the present calendar. He was on two occasions Ambassador to Holland, and had bestowed upon him, after once refusing it, the Order of the Garter. This was the only distinction he ever sought, and on the contrary a number were refused. Later he was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, discharging the difficult duties of the long coveted office with strict impartiality, and making a brilliant but brief record; he proved himself a true ruler though beset with embarrassing religious contentions, and demonstrated that he possessed the finest element of character—he was just.

His official career was immediately brought to a close in the office of Secretary of State, which he by no means desired, and in which he was allowed no freedom of action. He had little taste for sinecures, and soon declined to act further as a gilded automaton.

His name is remembered not on account of these distinctions but because of his stately manners. They became a not unimportant part of the man. They gave him the name of *The First Gentleman of Europe*. They admitted him into the companionship of the leading men of his time. They won for him as a wife the daughter of a sovereign. When hearing had departed and sight had nearly fled, they borrowed the livery of chivalry and remained steadfast and loyal to their courtly companion even to the last summons. At the same time they congealed him with the chill of culture. Notwithstanding

their veneer of charm they warned all not to trespass. And they forbade the approach of many a potential friend, for a repellant figure ever takes the chair from which spontaneity is ejected.

Finish and elegance of manner produced, also, a distrust in his sincerity which materially lessened his influence. Moreover, he was hobbled with a dangerous gift, one which led him to be known not only as "a wit among Lords" but "a Lord among wits." Had he been endowed with humor merely, it would never have alienated a friend, but wit became a weakness that proved costly, for he used a rusted rapier which inflicted not only a deep wound but one that would not heal.

Chesterfield came to realize this defect, but too late in life, probably, to correct it. When nearly sixty he takes occasion to write his son:

That ready wit which you so partially allow me . . . . . may create many admirers; but, take my word for it, it makes few friends. It shines and dazzles like the noonday sun, but, like that too, is very apt to scorch.

And some years later he writes to his godson:

The injustice of a bad man is sooner forgiven than the insult of a witty one; the former only hurts one's liberty and property, but the latter hurts and mortifies that secret pride which no human breast is free from.



This Attic salt is notable in his literary style; not only do striking figures and effective allusions abound, but the reader is often surprised and sometimes delighted with a picturesque or illuminating word, or a usual word employed in an unusual sense or relation, an embellishment ordinarily confined to makers of prose who are also weavers of poetry.

The accomplishments of the man aroused jealousy and made enemies who retarded his progress, so that his wealth of talent never won for him the place which it seemed to promise.

The monument which time has erected to his memory is the fame of the celebrated letters to his idolized son. The ruling passion of the father, a never-faltering love, pulsates throughout the entire series of letters covering a period stretching from the boy's early youth to his middle life. The letters were personal; they sprang from the heart; and when, after the death of father and son, they were given, or rather sold, to the world, the real character of the author stood revealed.

Philip Stanhope, the son, was awkward, which probably explains the undue emphasis that the father continually lays upon the Graces. In doing so he never misses a chance to rail at the manners of his countrymen, little thinking, of course, that his strictures upon them would ever become public property.

The boy was not made of hickory. His careful preparation for the public service under the eye of his constant, watchful, learned, and wise father,



served only for a mortifying experience as a member of the House of Commons, and uneventful diplomatic charges at Hamburg, Dresden, and Ratisbon, followed by an abortive and disastrous experiment at Brussels.

Followers of the curious will note with interest some prophetic words written by the father to the son five years before he was appointed to the first of these posts:

If to your merit and knowledge you add the art of pleasing, you may very probably come in time to be Secretary of State; but, take my word for it, twice your merit and knowledge, without the art of pleasing, would at most raise you to the *important post* of Resident at Hamburg or Ratisbon.

Thus the fond parent's hope by day and dream by night ended, like so many other consuming ambitions, in disappointment, reserved, moreover, for the decline of life, when he was least able to rise above it—perhaps a punishment for violating the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

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# THE MODERN CHESTERFIELD





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# LORD CHESTERFIELD'S LETTERS TO HIS SON

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## I

November 20, 1739.

DEAR BOY:

As you are now reading Roman History I hope you do it with the care and attention that it deserves. The utility of history consists principally in the examples it gives of those who have gone before us: upon which we ought to make the proper observations. History animates and excites us to the love and practice of virtue, by showing us the regard and veneration which were always paid to great and virtuous men in the times in which they lived, and the praise and glory with which their names have been perpetuated and transmitted to our times.

Roman History furnishes more examples of virtue and magnanimity, or greatness of mind, than any other.

It was a common thing for the Consuls and Dictators to leave the plow and lead their armies against their enemies; and, after victory, to return to their plows and pass the rest of their lives in

modest retirement—a retirement more glorious, if possible, than the victories which preceded it!

Many of the greatest men of Rome died so poor that they were buried at the expense of the public.

Curius, who had no money of his own, refused a great sum offered him by the Samnites, saying that he saw no glory in having money himself but in commanding those who had.

Fabricius, who had often commanded the Roman armies, and as often triumphed over the enemy, went back to his fireside, and to a diet of roots and herbs which he had planted and cultivated in his own field.

Such are the characters that you should imitate if you would be a great and good man, which is the only way to be a happy one!

## II

Wednesday.

DEAR BOY:

You behaved so well last Sunday that you justly deserve commendation; besides, you encourage me to give you some rules of politeness and good breeding, persuaded as I am that you will observe them.

Know, then, that as learning, honor, and virtue are absolutely necessary to gain the esteem and admiration of mankind, politeness and good breeding are equally necessary to make you welcome and agreeable in conversation and in common life.

Great talents, such as learning, honor, virtue, and parts, are above the generality of men, who neither possess them nor judge of them rightly in others; but all people are judges of the less talents, such as civility, gentleness, and an obliging and ingratiating address and manner, because they feel the good effects of them in making society easy and pleasing.

Good sense must in many cases determine good manners, because the same thing that would be civil at one time, and to one person, may be quite otherwise at another time, and to another person; but there are some general rules that always hold true. For example, it is rude to answer only *yes* or *no*, to anybody.

It is likewise extremely rude not to give the proper attention and a civil answer when people speak to you; or to leave them, or to be doing something else than listening while they are speaking to

you; for such conduct convinces them that you do not think it worth while to hear what they have to say.

Besides being civil, which is absolutely necessary, the perfection of good manners is to be civil with ease. If you wish a model you should observe the French, who excel in this art, and whose politeness seems as easy and natural as their conversation, whereas the English are often awkward in their civilities, and when they mean to be civil are too much ashamed to succeed.

But pray remember never to be embarrassed in doing what is right: you would have a great deal of reason to be ashamed if you were not civil; but not for being so. And why not say a civil and obliging thing as easily and naturally as you would ask the time of day? This kind of bashfulness is the distinguishing characteristic of an English booby who is frightened out of his wits when people of fashion speak to him, and when he is to answer them, blushes, stammers, can hardly make known what he would say, and becomes really ridiculous from a groundless fear of being laughed at, whereas a really well-bred man would speak to any king in the world with as little concern and as much ease as he would speak to you.

Remember, then, that to be civil, and to be civil with ease, which is properly called good manners, is the only way to become beloved, and to be well received in company; that to be ill-bred and rude is intolerable; and that to be bashful is to be ridiculous.



Hand-shaking is one of the fine arts. Some condemn it, but they are ultra-reserved. Study the most pleasing hand-clasps of men of real worth, and adopt the best parts of all, having a care to let your own be characteristic of yourself. A firm pressure is better than pumping; and the thumb and the muscle at its base may be used with good effect. Have in mind that the hand-shake is specially important because it is one means of conveying a first impression—if it is cordial, it creates a favorable atmosphere which will win you many friends and smooth some rough places. Offering the left hand is not an uncommon affectation, very obnoxious to some, for it has the suggestion of assumed superiority, or indifference, or condescension, not unreasonably if we test it by the fact that no one meeting or parting from a superior would ever extend the left hand.

For like reasons, when conditions warrant it have a kindly phrase of welcome on your lips. A meeting well started has a momentum that carries a great distance.

These are not to be considered tricks, but rather aids to happiness, and happiness is one of the foremost objects of life.

## III

Spa, July 25, N. S., 1741.

DEAR BOY:

I have often told you that good breeding is absolutely necessary to make you liked and sought after in private life. Not only is it very important in itself, but it adds great luster to the more solid attainments both of the heart and the mind.

This letter shall concern the next necessary qualification to it, which is a gentle, easy manner and carriage, wholly free from those odd tricks, ill habits, and awkwardness which afflict even worthy and sensible people. However trifling the subject of a gentle manner may seem, such a grace is of importance in the matter of pleasing in private life, especially such women as, at one time or another, you will think worth pleasing. I have known many a man, from his clumsiness, to give people such a dislike to him at first that all his merit could not get the better of it afterwards, whereas a gentle manner prepossesses people in your favor, bends them towards you, and makes them wish to like you.

Awkwardness can proceed but from two causes—either not having kept good company, or not having attended to it. As for your keeping good company, I will take care of that; you take care to observe their ways and manners and to form your own upon them. Attention is absolutely necessary for this, as indeed it is for everything else, and a man without attention is not fit to live in the world. When an

awkward fellow comes into a room he very probably will stumble. At dinner his awkwardness distinguishes itself particularly; he holds his knife, fork, or spoon differently from other people, and picks his teeth. If he is to carve he can never hit the joint, but, in his vain efforts to cut through the bone, scatters the sauce. When he drinks he infallibly coughs in his glass and besprinkles his neighbor. Besides all this he has strange tricks and gestures, such as snuffing up his nose, making faces, putting his finger in his nose or blowing it at table, or if not at table, looking afterwards in his handkerchief, so as in either case to make the company sick. His hands are troublesome to him and he does not know where to put them; they are in perpetual motion between his bosom and his breeches; he does not wear his clothes, nor, in short, does he do anything, like other people. All this, I own, is not in any degree criminal; but it is highly disagreeable in company and ought to be shunned by whoever desires to please.

There is, likewise, a crudeness of expression and of words most carefully to be avoided, such as false English, bad pronunciation, slang, old sayings, and common proverbs, which are so many proofs of having kept inferior company. For example, if, instead of saying that tastes differ, and that every man has his own peculiar one, you should let off a proverb and exclaim, "Every one as he likes, as the good man said as he kissed the cow," all would be persuaded that you had never kept company with anybody above footmen and housemaids.



Attention will correct these faults, and without attention nothing can be done; want of it, which is really want of thought, is folly. You should not only give attention to everything, but with alertness, so as to observe at once all the people in the room, their motions, looks, and words, and yet without staring at them or seeming to be an observer. This quick and concealed observation is of infinite advantage and can be acquired by care.

I would have you keep in mind the distinction between good manners and courtesy. In our class good manners are not uncommon but in general we lack courtesy, which is on much the higher plane, for it involves justice—a just consideration for the feelings of others as well as a regard for their rights.

## IV

Spa, August 6, 1741.

DEAR BOY:

I warned you in my last against those disagreeable tricks which many people contract when they are young, through the negligence of their parents, and cannot get rid of when they are old; such as odd motions, strange postures, and ungente carriage.

There is likewise an awkwardness of the mind that ought to be avoided, and with care it may be, as, for instance, to mistake or forget names; or to call people by improper titles or appellations. To begin a story or narration when you are not perfect in it and cannot go through with it, but are forced, possibly, to say in the middle of it, "I have forgotten the rest," is unpleasant and bungling.

One must be extremely exact, clear, and perspicuous in everything he says; otherwise, instead of entertaining or informing others he only tires and puzzles them. The voice and manner of speaking are not to be neglected; some people almost shut their mouths when they speak, and mutter so that they can not be understood; others, with the same result, talk fast and sputter; some speak loud, as if they were talking to deaf people; and others so low that you cannot hear them.

All these habits are disagreeable, and may be avoided by attention; they are the distinguishing marks of those who have had no care taken of their education. You cannot imagine how necessary it is

to mind all these little things, for I have seen people with great talents ill received for want of having these small ones; and others well received because of their little talents, when they had no great ones.



## V

Paris, August, 1741.

DEAR BOY:

Since my last I have changed considerably for the better, thanks to the pleasures of Paris, which, however, you will be better able to enjoy than I. It is a magnificent town, not nearly so big as London, but much finer, the houses being larger and all of stone. It is not only much enlarged but embellished by the magnificence of the last King, Louis XIV, and a prodigious number of expensive buildings and useful and charitable foundations, such as libraries, hospitals, and schools, will long remain the monuments of the magnificence, humanity, and good government of that Prince.

The people here are well-bred, just as I would have you be; they are not awkwardly bashful and ashamed, like the English, but easily civil without ceremony. Though they are very gay and lively, they give attention to everything, always minding what they are about. I hope you now do the same, and that my highest expectations of your improvement will be more than answered, for I hope to find you proficient in both Greek and Latin. As to the genius of poetry, I own that if nature has not given it to you, you cannot have it, for it is true that poets are born, not made; but the invention and imagination of the poet are alone referred to, for everybody can, by application, make himself master of the mechanical part of poetry, which consists in num-

bers, rhymes, measure, and harmony of verse. Ovid was born with such a genius for poetry that he says he could not help thinking in verse, whether he would or not, and often spoke verses without intending to do so.

I would not have you a poet, but you will miss a great deal if you do not become familiar in your youth with the best poetry, to which people daily refer in their ordinary intercourse. There is a rich vocabulary to be acquired from poetry, not to be had elsewhere, that illuminates one's conversation. There is, also, a culture of the heart which flows from contact with the imaginative and emotional features, largely wanting in prose. For these reasons I recommend acquiring the *habit* of reading poetry, not in heavy doses, but a little each day, committing a short poem now and then, and copying fine passages and preserving them for future use, for a bit of such literature gives a fine touch to an address.

Contrary to the rule respecting poets, it is certain that by study and application every man can make of himself a fairly good orator, eloquence depending upon observation and care. Every man may choose good words instead of bad ones, may speak properly instead of improperly, may be clear and perspicuous in his recitals, instead of dark and muddy, may have grace instead of awkwardness in his motions and gestures; in short, may be an agreeable, instead of a disagreeable, speaker, if he will take the pains. And surely it is well worth while to take a great deal of pains to excel other men in that particular article in which they excel beasts.

Cicero and Caesar appreciated so fully the advantages to be gained from proficiency in public speaking that they sought instruction in the art.

Demosthenes, the celebrated Greek orator, the exponent of the theory that action, by which is meant *delivery*, is the soul of oratory, stuttered and had weak lungs, but he thought it so absolutely necessary to speak well that he resolved by application to get the better of those disadvantages. Accordingly, he cured his stammering by putting small pebbles in his mouth, and strengthened his lungs gradually by accustoming himself every day to declaim with force and distinctness for a long time. He likewise went often to the sea-shore and there used the full strength of his voice in order to enure himself to the noise and murmurs of the Athenian popular assemblies. By such care, joined to the constant study of the best authors, he became at last the greatest orator of his own country and of his own age, and probably of any country and of all the ages, though born without any natural talent for public speaking. Good-bye! Copy Demosthenes.



## VI

Bath, June 28, 1742.

DEAR BOY:

Your promises give me great pleasure, and your performance of them, upon which I rely, will give me still greater. Promises are to be sparingly made and faithfully kept. I am sure you know that breaking your word is a folly as well as a dishonor. It is a folly because nobody will trust you afterwards; it is a dishonor, truth being the first duty of religion and morality; and whoever has not truth cannot be supposed to have any other good quality, and must become detested by God and man.

Since I now have your voluntary promise, I expect, from your truth and your honor, that you will do that which, independently of your promise, your own interest and ambition ought to incline you to do, that is, to excel in everything you undertake. When I was of your age I should have been ashamed if any boy of my years had learned his books better, except in the matter of mathematics, wherein I was lame at birth, or if any such rival played at any play better than I did; and I would not have rested a moment until I had pushed ahead of him.

Julius Caesar, who had a noble thirst for glory, said that he would rather be first in a little shepherd's village than second in Rome; and Plutarch, the great biographer, tells in his engaging way an instructive anecdote of Caesar. He says:

Again in Spain, when he had some leisure and was reading the history of Alexander, he was for a long time in deep thought, and at last burst into tears; and on his friends asking the reason of this, he said, "Don't you think it is a matter of sorrow that Alexander was king of so many nations at such an early age, and I have as yet done nothing of note?"

These sentiments are manly, and those who do not have them will pass their lives in obscurity and contempt, whereas those who endeavor to excel all are at least certain of excelling many.

The sure way to excel in anything is to maintain a close and undissipated attention while you are about it, and then you need not spend half the time on it that otherwise you must; for long, plodding, puzzling application is the business of dullness, but good parts attend regularly and take a thing immediately.

Consider, then, which you would choose; to attend diligently while you are learning, and thereby excel all other boys, get a great reputation, and have a great deal more time to play; or not mind your books, let boys even younger than yourself pass beyond you, be laughed at by them for a dunce, and have no time to play at all: for, I assure you, if you will not learn, you cannot play.

What is the way, then, to arrive at that perfection at which you agree to aim? It is: First, to do your duty towards God and man, without which everything else signifies nothing; Second, to



acquire great knowledge, without which you will be a contemptible man, though you be an honest and even an honorable one; and, lastly, to be well-bred, without which you will be a disagreeable, unpleasing man, even though an upright and a learned one.

## VII

Dublin Castle, November 19, 1745.

DEAR BOY:

Now that the Christmas breaking-up draws near I have ordered Mr. Desnoyers to go to you and teach you to dance. I desire you particularly to attend to the graceful motion of your arms, which, with the manner of giving your hand, is all that a gentleman need attend to. Dancing, in itself, is a trifling thing, but it is one of those established follies to which people of sense are sometimes obliged to conform, and they should be able to do it well. Though I would not have you a dancer, yet, when you dance, I would have you do it well, as I would have you do in all that you undertake. I have never counted it a distinction to play a fine game of billiards, but when I took up the game I made up my mind to have the respect of my antagonist.

Nearly everything is, for one reason or another, important; some things are more important than others. There is no one thing so inconsequential but that it ought to be done well, if it is to be done at all. For instance, dress is foolish, and yet it is foolish not to be dressed well according to one's rank and way of life. I confess that I cannot help forming some opinion of a man's character from his dress, and I believe that other people do the same. It is so far from being a reflection upon any man's understanding that it is rather a proof of it, to be as well dressed as those with whom he lives. Any

affectation whatsoever in dress implies, to my mind, a flaw in the understanding, and, in general, jewels and colors, which are so precious to the savage, are adopted, by the several men you meet, in the inverse order of their merit. Most young fellows display some characteristic dress. Some affect the tremendous; they wear a great and fiercely cocked hat, a short waistcoat, and a black cravat; these are meek asses in lions' skins. Others go about in brown frocks and leather breeches, carrying great oaken cudgels, their hats uncocked, and they imitate grooms, stage-coachmen, and country bumpkins.

A man of sense carefully avoids any particular character in his dress. He knows that if he dresses better than people of sense he will be a fop; that if he dresses worse, he is unpardonably negligent; and he realizes that if remiss in the matter at twenty he will be a sloven at forty, and a social exile at fifty. When you are once well-dressed, think no more of the matter and let all your motions be easy and natural. The difference in this case between a man of sense and a fop is that the fop values himself upon his dress, and the man of sense laughs at it while knowing he must not neglect it, for, among other things, it may be a part of the potential *first impression*.

There are a thousand foolish customs which, not being criminal, must be complied with even cheerfully by men of sense. Diogenes the Cynic was a wise man for despising them, but a fool for showing it. Be wiser than other people if you can, but do not tell them so.

## VIII

Dublin Castle, April 5, 1746.

DEAR BOY:

In my opinion you will before long both think and speak more favorably of women than you do now. You seem to think that from Eve downward they have done a great deal of mischief, but history will inform you that men have done much more mischief in the world than women.

I advise you never to attack whole bodies of any kind, for all general rules have their exceptions, and you unnecessarily make enemies by attacking a corps collectively. Among women, as among men, there are good as well as bad.

This rule applies to lawyers, soldiers, parsons, courtiers, citizens. They are all subject to the same passions and sentiments, differing only in the manner, according to their several educations, and it would be as imprudent as unjust to attack any of these classes in the lump. Individuals forgive sometimes, but bodies and societies never do. I may add that in public life I have carried this rule still further—I oppose measures, not men.

All general reflections upon nations and societies are the trite, threadbare jokes of those who merely set up for wits. Judge of the individuals from your own knowledge of them, and not from their sex, profession, or denomination.



When I was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland the office was understood to be one, as the Duke of Shrewsbury described it, wherein a man has business enough to prevent him from falling asleep and not sufficient to keep him awake. You know that if this were true the place would not suit an active and a hard-working man such as you know me to be, but I made up my mind at the time that there would be plenty to do, of importance, too; and so it has proved. The truth is that the business here is continual, and as I am resolved to do it while I remain, it leaves me little time for things I like better.

The situation affords me an opportunity to set a good example to my Irish brethren, who are not very industrious, perhaps because there is altogether too much drinking among them. And in that matter, too, I am taking occasion to set them an example of abstemiousness, having in mind that they are as fit for arts, sciences, industry, and labor as any people in the world, and might, notwithstanding some hard restraints which England by a mistaken policy has laid them under, push several branches of trade to great perfection and profit. I shall always entertain the truest affection for this country, whose men, by the way, are the healthiest and strongest of whom I have any knowledge.



## IX

Bath, October 4, O. S., 1746.

DEAR BOY:

To my mind, one may as well not know a thing at all as to know it imperfectly. To know a little of anything gives neither satisfaction nor credit, and often brings disgrace or ridicule.

Pope says, very truly,

A little learning is a dangerous thing;  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.

What is called a smattering of everything infallibly constitutes a coxcomb. I have often, of late, reflected what an unhappy man I would now be if I had not acquired in my youth some fund of learning as well as a taste for it. Otherwise, what could I do with myself at this age? As many ignorant people do, I would be destroying my health and faculties by sitting away the evenings; or, by wasting them frivolously in the tattle of women's company, would be exposing myself to the ridicule and contempt of those very women; or, lastly, I would hang myself, as a man once did, for weariness of putting on and pulling off his shoes and stockings every day. For now my books, and my books alone, are left to me.

I do not mean by this to exclude conversation from the pleasures of advanced age; on the contrary, it is a great and rational pleasure at all ages; but

the conversation of the ignorant is no conversation, and gives even them no pleasure; they tire of their own sterility.

Let me, then, most earnestly recommend you to hoard up, while you can, a great stock of learning; during the dissipation of your youth you may not have occasion to spend much of it, yet a time will come when you will need it.

I will say no more to you upon this subject; you have your tutor to enforce it; you have reason to assent to the truth of it; so that, in short, you "have Moses and the Prophets"; if you "hear not" them, "neither will" you "be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Do not imagine that the knowledge which I so much recommend to you is confined to books, pleasing, useful, and necessary as they are; I include in it the great knowledge of the world, still more necessary than that of books. In truth, the two assist each other reciprocally; and no man will have either perfectly who does not acquire both. The knowledge of the world is to be learned in the world, and not in a closet. Books alone will never teach it to you, but they will suggest many things which might otherwise escape you; and your own observations upon mankind when compared with those which you find in books will help you to fix the true point.

To know mankind well requires as much attention and application as to know books, and, it may be, more sagacity and discernment. I am, at this time, acquainted with many elderly people who have passed their lives in the great world but with such

inattention that they know hardly more of it now than they did at fifteen.

Do not flatter yourself therefore with the thought that you can acquire this knowledge in the frivolous chit-chat of idle companions: no, you must dig much deeper than that. You must look *into* people as well as *at* them. You must observe as well as see. Try to be wise as well as learned.

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## X

Bath, October 9, O. S., 1746.

DEAR BOY:

I must say a word to you of negligence. You know that I have often told you that my affection for you is not a weak one; and, far from blinding me, it makes me but the more quick-sighted as to your faults; of those it is not only my right but my duty to tell you, and it is your duty and your interest to correct them.

In the strict scrutiny which I have made of you I have, thank God, hitherto not found any vice of the heart, nor any peculiar weakness of the head; but I have discovered laziness, inattention, and indifference—faults which are pardonable only in old men, who, in the decline of life, when health and spirits fail, have a kind of claim to that sort of tranquillity. A young man should be ambitious to shine and excel; alert, active, and indefatigable in the means of doing it. Without the desire and the pains necessary, depend upon it you can never excel, as, without the desire and attention necessary to please, you never can please.

I am sure that any man of common understanding may, by proper culture, care, attention, and labor make of himself whatever he pleases. Your destination is the great and busy world; your object is the affairs, interests, history, constitutions, customs, and manners of the several parts of Europe. In this any man of common sense, by application,



may be sure to excel. Ancient and modern history are by study easily mastered. With geography and chronology it is the same. None of them requires any uncommon share of genius or invention. Speaking and writing clearly, correctly, and with ease and grace are certainly to be acquired by reading the best authors with care, and by attention to the best models.

These are the qualifications more particularly necessary for you in your department, which you may be possessed of if you please, and which, I tell you fairly, I shall be very angry at you if you are not, because, as you have the means in your hands, it will be your own fault.

If care and application are necessary to the acquiring of these qualifications, without which you can never make a figure in the world, they are none the less necessary with regard to the small accomplishments requisite to make you agreeable and pleasing in society.

He who is commonly called an absent man is ordinarily weak or affected; but be he which he will, he is, I am sure, a disagreeable man in company. He fails in all the common offices of civility; he seems not to know those to-day with whom yesterday he appeared to live on terms of intimacy. He takes no part in the general conversation, but, on the contrary, breaks into it from time to time with some start of his own as if waking from a dream.

Sir Isaac Newton, Locke, and perhaps five or six more, may have had a right to absence, from that intense thought which the things they were



investigating required. But if a young man and a man of the world, who has no such engrossments to plead, will claim and exercise that right of absence, his pretended right should, to my mind, be turned into an involuntary absence by his perpetual exclusion from company.

Attention may be cultivated like any other faculty. If you will contest with your companions to see who can remember the greatest number of objects in a shop window as you pass by it, or who can remember the most of a book page, read for the purpose, you will find it interesting, and by frequent practice you will increase your capacity for attention, as well as your ability to observe quickly.

However frivolous a company may be, still, while you are among them, do not show by your inattention that you think them so; but rather take their tone, and conform in some degree to their weakness instead of manifesting your contempt for them. There is nothing people bear more impatiently, or forgive less, than contempt; and an injury is much sooner forgotten than an insult.

If therefore you would rather make others happy than uncomfortable, would rather please than offend, rather be well than ill spoken of, rather be loved than hated, remember to have that constant attention about you which flatters every man's little vanity, and the want of which, by mortifying his pride, never fails to excite his resentment, or at least his ill-will. For instance, most people, I might say all people, have aversions to certain things and likings for others; if you were to laugh at a man

for his aversion to a cat or to cheese, which are common antipathies, or negligently let them come in his way when you could prevent it, he would, in the first case, think himself insulted and, in the second, slighted, and would remember either, whereas your care to procure for him what he likes, and to remove from him what he dislikes, shows him that he is at least an object of your attention; it flatters his vanity and makes him possibly more your friend than a more important service would have done.

With regard to women, attentions still below these are necessary, and in some measure due, by the custom of the world and according to the laws of good breeding.

## XI

London, March 27, O. S., 1747.

MY DEAR BOY:

Pleasure is the rock upon which most young people split: they launch out with crowded sails in quest of it, but without a compass to direct their course, or reason sufficient to steer the vessel; and pain and shame, instead of pleasure, are the returns of their voyage. Do not think I mean to snarl at pleasure like a stoic, or to preach against it like a parson; no, I mean to point it out, and recommend it to you like an epicurean: I wish you a great deal, and my only object is to hinder you from failing to distinguish between pleasure and happiness, and from enjoying one at the expense of the other.

The character at which most young men aim is that of a man of pleasure, but they generally take it upon trust, and instead of consulting their own taste and inclinations they blindly adopt whatever those with whom they chiefly converse are pleased to call by the name of pleasure. As it may be of use to you, I am willing to confess, though ashamed to own, that the vices of my youth proceeded much more from my silly resolution to be what I heard called a man of pleasure than from my own inclinations.

I naturally hated drinking, and yet I often drank, with disgust at the time, attended by great sickness the next day, merely because I mistakenly considered drinking a necessary qualification for a



fine gentleman and a man of pleasure. There is but one safe course for the young, as I have so often told you, and that is to let liquor alone entirely until you are of age and have completed your studies. By that time you will have learned to better command yourself, and can make up your mind how far one of your temperament ought to be set free among such dangers. Three out of four drunkards acquire the habit in their nonage, and many a youth, as strong in character and will as you, has gone down from overconfidence in his powers of resistance, misled by the conceit that *he* knew where to draw the line.

As to gambling, I did not need money and consequently had no occasion to play for it, but I thought play another necessary ingredient in the composition of a man of pleasure, and accordingly I plunged into it, without desire at first, sacrificed happiness to it, and made myself solidly uneasy by it.

Thus seduced by fashion, I blindly adopted nominal pleasures and lost real ones; an impaired fortune and a shattered constitution are, I confess, the just punishment for my errors.

Take warning, then; choose your pleasures for yourself, and do not let them be imposed upon you. Follow nature, and not fashion; weigh the present enjoyment of your pleasures against the necessary consequences of them, and then let your own common sense determine your choice.

Were I to begin the world again with the experience which I now have I would lead a life of happiness—of real, not imaginary pleasure.



I would pass some of my time in reading; the rest in the company of people of sense and learning, and chiefly of those above me, and I would frequent the mixed companies of men and women of fashion. Though often frivolous, they unbend and refresh the mind—not uselessly, because they certainly polish and soften the manners.

These would be my pleasures and amusements if I were to live the last thirty years over again; they are rational ones; and moreover they are really the fashionable ones; for the others are not, in truth, the pleasures of people of fashion, but of those who merely call themselves so. Does good company care to receive a man reeling drunk? Or to see another tearing his hair and blaspheming for having lost at play more than he is able to pay? Or a man with half a nose? No; those who practice vices, much more those who brag of them, are no part of good company, and are most unwillingly, if ever, admitted into it.

A real man of fashion observes decency; at least, neither borrows nor affects vices, and if, unfortunately, he has any, gratifies them with choice delicacy and secrecy.

I have not mentioned the pleasures of the mind. They are the complete and permanent ones, but they do not come under the head of what people commonly call pleasures, which they seem to confine to the senses. The pleasure of virtue, of charity, and of learning is true and lasting pleasure; it is happiness, with which I hope you will be well and long acquainted.

## XII

London, April 14, O. S., 1747.

DEAR BOY:

I have always earnestly recommended to you to do what you are about, be that what it will, and to do nothing else at the same time.

Do not imagine that I mean by this that you should plod at your books all day long. Far from it; I mean that you should have your pleasures, too; and that you should attend to them as much as to your studies; and if you do not attend equally to both, you will not have improvement or satisfaction from either.

A man is unfit for either business or pleasure unless he directs his attention to the present object, and in some degree banishes, for the time, all other objects from his thoughts. If at a ball, a supper, or a party of pleasure a man were to be solving in his own mind a problem of Euclid, he would be a bad companion and make a poor figure; or if, in studying a problem in his closet, he were to think of a minuet, I believe that he would make a poor mathematician.

There is a time for everything in the course of the day if you do but one thing at a time to completion. De Witt, who was torn to pieces in the year 1672, did the whole business of the Republic, and yet had time left to go to assemblies and sup in company. Being asked how he could possibly find time to go through so much business and yet

amuse himself in the evenings as he did, he answered, "There is nothing so easy; for it is only doing one thing at a time, and never putting off anything until tomorrow that can be done today."

This steady and undissipated attention to one subject is a sure mark of superior genius, as hurry, bustle, and agitation are the never-failing symptoms of a weak mind. When you read Horace attend to the justness of his thoughts, the happiness of his diction, and the beauty of his poetry, and do not think of Puffendorf; when you are reading Puffendorf, do not think of Madame de St. Germain; nor of Puffendorf when you are talking to Madame de St. Germain.



## XIII

London, July 30, O. S., 1747.

DEAR BOY:

You will have found by my late letter that you are to be at Leipzig by next Michaelmas, where you will be lodged in the house of the learned Professor Mascow, and boarded in the neighborhood with some young men of fashion. I expect you while there to make yourself master of the German language, which you may very soon do if you please.

There is a great deal of company at Leipzig which I would have you frequent in the evenings, when the studies of the day are over, but I must remind you at the same time that it will be of little purpose to frequent good company if you do not conform to their manners.

As you must attend to your manners, so you must not neglect your person; take care to be clean, well dressed, and gentle; to have no disagreeable attitudes, nor awkward tricks, to which many people accustom themselves and then cannot leave them off.

While I am speaking of cleanliness of the person I may as well refer to a somewhat unusual subject.

It is strange that we can overlook an offense to every sense but that of smell. The olfactory nerve is a tyrant. One cannot be too careful in this matter. To me, artificial perfume has about it the suggestion that some perfume is necessary, so that



it destroys its purpose. And it has been truly said that *there is no perfume so sweet as the perfume of clean linen*. An entire change of raiment each day is a good plan. This applies to outside as well as inside apparel, and to live up to the rule requires only two sets of garments. One is airing at the windows all night. It is damp in the morning and hung in the closet to dry until the next morning, when it is ready for use. Meanwhile the other is being worn; and the two are thus alternated throughout the week. Of course the main recipe for an acceptable body is the daily bath of hot water to be clean, followed by cold water to close the pores and to obviate catching cold: a *luxury*, but it makes friends, and the sense of being clean is a real source of strength to nerves and will.

Take care to keep your teeth clean by brushing them carefully every morning and at bed-time, and when practicable after every meal. This is necessary to preserve your teeth and to save you pain and discomfort. Mine have plagued me long, and are now falling out merely for want of care when I was of your age.

Dress well, but not too well. Observe the dress of men of parts; you will perceive that it is neat, but never noticeable, either for conformity to fashion or disregard of it.

Consider sufficiently your air and manner of presenting yourself, but not too much! Be neither negligent nor stiff. All these things deserve a degree of care, a second-rate attention; they give an

additional luster to real worth. Bacon says that a pleasing figure is a perpetual letter of recommendation. It is certainly an agreeable forerunner of merit and smooths the way for it.

## XIV

London, August 7, O. S., 1747.

DEAR BOY:

I sent you by the last post a letter of recommendation to one of the first citizens of Munich, which you will take care to deliver to him in the most polite manner. He will have you presented to the Electoral family, and I hope you will go through that ceremony with great respect, good breeding, and ease.

As this is your first visit to a Court, take care to inform yourself of the particular customs to be observed, that you may not make any mistake. At Vienna men always make courtesies, instead of bows, to the Emperor; in France, nobody bows at all to the King or kisses his hand; but in Spain and England bows are made, and hands are kissed. Thus every Court has some peculiarity, of which, to avoid blunders, those who go to them ought previously to inform themselves.

I turn abruptly from this subject to remind you of my lifelong friend Lewin, whom you remember pleasantly, for his coming to our home was ever a benediction. He has a highly original mind (an uncommon endowment), and has boiled down the decalogue and all moral precepts into one: *Never leave a scar!* Give your imagination wings and you can make of this a comprehensive code.

The primary idea is never to leave a scar upon another; every wound which you can justly inflict,

in great matters and in small, must be such that it will heal without leaving a trace. Think how your cruel or inconsiderate acts and words are thus limited.

Secondarily, you must not leave a scar upon yourself!

Keep both these ideas before you, and when alluring temptations beset you, apply them conscientiously with their full, proper atmosphere, and you will not go far in the wrong path.

Take special care to keep this rule in mind now and in later years in your association with women. Be sure that upon their sensitive souls you *never leave a scar*, and have a care, also, that they leave no scar on you.

I have another friend, a little woman, who lives by another of these laconic codes. It consists of but two words: *Be honest*. Less imaginative than the other, it is equally comprehensive when interpreted broadly. I will illustrate the manner in which it is applied: she is restrained in many particulars not so much by religious or ethical rules, such as govern her sisters of less mentality, as by the faith of her friends in her own integrity. And she feels it would not *be honest* to fall below the standard which her friends believe to be hers. I count it an inspiration to have such a friend—a woman capable of evolving such a philosophy and of living up to it, as she does, with the spirit of a soldier.

Justinian, in his *Institutes*, endeavored to condense morals into a sentence, and he nearly succeeded. You know the instance: "These are the pre-



cepts of the law: to live honorably, to injure nobody, to render to everyone his due." Many generations have come and gone since that was written but it has not been improved upon.

While I am writing in this vein I must tell you of a striking thought uttered by Judge Burke in a recent public speech in which he was discussing moral philosophy. "The code of Socrates," he said, "was, *Know thyself*; the code of Marcus Aurelius, *Restrain thyself*; the code of Christ, *Deny thyself*." And if a man lived up to the true meaning of any of those commands he would be good and just.

But the greatest of all these condensed moral guides is, of course, the Golden Rule, which, by the way, seems to me technically imperfect. You may be willing that others should act unjustly to you, and in that event doing unto others "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you," would license you to act unjustly to them. The true intent of the rule is unmistakable—to do unto others as they should be done by. But think how much would have been lost to the world by being too exact, for if the rule had been stated strictly it would have lost its vitality, its appeal, its argument to the man, its grip.

Confucius, who preceded Socrates in the doctrine *Know thyself*, and who, in passing, did not lay claim to any divine inspiration, stated the principle of the Golden Rule in negative form, expressed in these words: "Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you."

## XV

London, September 21, O. S., 1747.

DEAR BOY:

I received by the last post your letter of the eighth and I do not wonder that you were surprised at the credulity and superstition of the Papists at Einsiedeln. But remember that errors and mistakes, however gross, in matters of opinion, are to be condoned, and not punished or laughed at. The blindness of the understanding is as much to be pitied as the blindness of the eye. Each man's reason must be his guide; and I might as well expect everyone to be of my size and complexion as to reason just like me. Each individual seeks for the truth, but only God knows who has found it.

It is therefore as absurd to ridicule people, as it is unjust to punish them, for opinions which they cannot help entertaining upon the conviction of their reason. It is the man who tells or acts the lie that is guilty, and not he who honestly and sincerely believes. I really count nothing more criminal, mean, and ridiculous than lying. It is the product of unalloyed malice, cowardice, or vanity, and generally misses its aim in every one of these views, for lies are always detected sooner or later. If I tell a malicious untruth in order to affect any man's fortune or character I may indeed injure him for a time, but I shall be sure to be the greater sufferer myself at last, for as soon as I am detected I am blasted for the infamous attempt, and whatever is

said afterwards to the disadvantage of that person, however true, passes for calumny. If I lie or equivocate in order to excuse myself for something that I have said or done, or to escape the consequences, I disclose my fear as well as my falsehood, and increase rather than avoid the danger or the shame; I show myself to be low and mean, and am sure to be treated accordingly. Fear, instead of avoiding, invites danger, for concealed cowards will insult known ones. If one has had the misfortune to be in the wrong there is something noble in frankly acknowledging it—it is the only way of atoning for it, and the only path to forgiveness.

There is another sort of lies, inoffensive enough in themselves, but ridiculous: I mean those which vanity suggests, that defeat the very end for which they are calculated, and terminate in humiliation and confusion; these are chiefly narrative and historical, intended to do honor to their author. He is always the hero of his own romances; he has been in dangers from which nobody but himself escaped; he has seen with his own eyes whatever other people have heard of; and has ridden more miles post in one day than ever a courier went in two. He is soon discovered, and becomes the object of contempt and ridicule.

Remember, then, as long as you live, that nothing but strict truth can carry you through the world with either your character or your reputation unwounded, and as you jog along you will observe that the greatest fools are the greatest liars.



## XVI

London, October 2, O. S., 1747.

DEAR BOY:

From your last letter I learn that you are a tolerably good *landscape* painter, and can present to the curious the several views of Switzerland.

I am glad of it, as it is a proof of attention, but I hope you will be as good a *portrait* painter, which is a much more noble art. By portraits, you will easily judge, I do not mean the outlines and the coloring of the human figure but the inside of the heart and mind. This art requires more attention, observation, and penetration than the other, and indeed it is infinitely more useful. Search therefore with the greatest care into the characters of all those with whom you converse; endeavor to discover their dominant passions, their prevailing weaknesses, their vanities, their follies, and their humors, together with all the right and wrong, the wise and silly springs of human actions, which make such inconsistent and whimsical beings of us rational creatures. A moderate share of penetration with great attention will infallibly make these necessary discoveries.

This is the true knowledge of the world; and the world is a country which nobody ever yet knew by description; to be acquainted with it one must travel through it himself. The scholar, who in the dust of his closet talks or writes of the



world, knows no more of it than the orator did of war who judiciously endeavored to teach the art of war to Hannibal.

Courts and camps are the only places in which to learn the world. There alone all kinds of characters resort, and human nature is seen in all the various shapes and modes given to it by education, custom, and habit, whereas in all other places one local mode generally prevails and produces a seeming, though not a real, sameness of character. For example, one general mode distinguishes a university town, another a trading town, a third a seaport town, whereas at a capital, where the supreme power resides, some or all of these modes are to be seen, and seen in action, each person exerting his utmost skill in pursuit of his object.

Human nature is the same all over the world but its operations are so varied by education and habit that one must see it in all its dresses in order to be intimately acquainted with it. The passion of ambition, for instance, is the same in a courtier, a soldier, or an ecclesiastic, but from their different educations and habits they will take very different methods of gratifying it. Civility, which is a disposition to accommodate and oblige others, is essentially the same in every country, but good breeding, as it is called, which is the manner of exerting that disposition, is unlike in different countries. It is merely local, and every man of sense imitates and conforms to the local variety.

Conformity, which involves flexibility of manners, is necessary in the course of the world; that

is, with regard to all things not wrong in themselves. A genius for versatility is the most useful of all this class of graces—the ability to turn instantly from one object to another, assuming the proper manner for each—to be serious with the grave, cheerful with the gay, and trifling with the frivolous. Endeavor by all means to acquire this talent, for it is a great one.

## XVII

London, October 9, O. S., 1747.

DEAR BOY:

People of your age have commonly about them an unguarded frankness which makes them the easy prey of the artful; they look upon every knave or fool who tells them that he is their friend, to be really so, and they reward that profession of simulated friendship with an indiscreet and unbounded confidence, always to their loss, sometimes to their ruin.

Beware therefore, now that you are coming into the world, of these professed friends. Receive them with great civility but with great incredulity, too, and pay them with compliments but not with confidence. Do not let your vanity and self-love make you suppose that people become your friends at first sight, or even upon a short acquaintance. Real friendship is of slow growth, and never thrives unless grafted upon a stock of known and reciprocal merit.

There is another kind of nominal friendship among young people which is warm for the time, but, by good luck, of short duration. This friendship is hastily induced by accidental association in the pursuit of pleasure. Friends thus made lend each other money for bad purposes; they engage in quarrels, offensive and defensive; they tell each other all they know and often more; and when, of a sudden, some accident separates them, they think

no more of each other. Remember to draw a distinction between companions and friends, for a very complaisant and agreeable companion may, and often does, prove a very improper and dangerous friend.

People will in a great degree and not without reason form their opinion of you upon that which they have of your friends, and there is a Spanish proverb which says very justly, *Tell me with whom you live and I will tell you who you are*. One may fairly suppose that a man who makes a friend of a knave or a fool has something bad to do, or to conceal. But at the same time that you carefully decline the friendship of knaves and fools, if it can be called friendship, there is no occasion wantonly to make them your enemies. I would rather choose a secure neutrality than alliance or war with them. You may be a declared foe to their vices and follies without being marked out by them as an enemy, for their enmity is the next dangerous thing to their friendship.

Have a real reserve with almost everybody, and have a seeming reserve with almost nobody, for it is very disagreeable to seem reserved and very dangerous not to be so. Few people find the true medium; many are ridiculously mysterious and reserved upon trifles, and many imprudently communicative of all they know.

The next thing to the choice of your friends is the choice of your company. Endeavor as much as you can to keep company with people above you, with whom you rise as much as you sink with people below you, for you will not rise above the



company you keep. Do not mistake when I say *company above you* and think that I have reference to birth alone; that is the least consideration. I refer to worth, and the light in which the world considers the company.

There are two sorts of good company; one consists of those people who have the lead in the gay part of life; the other consists of those who are distinguished by some peculiar merit of mind or heart, or who excel in some useful or valuable art or science. For my own part I used to think myself in company as much above me when I was with Addison and Pope as if I had been with all the princes of Europe.

What I mean by low company is those who, absolutely insignificant and contemptible in themselves, think they are honored by being in your company, and who flatter every vice and folly you have in order to engage you to converse with them. The pride of being the first in the company is but natural, yet it is silly and prejudicial.

You may possibly ask me if a man has it always in his power to get into the best company. I answer, Yes, he has—by deserving it, provided he is in circumstances which enable him to appear upon the footing of a gentleman. Worth and good breeding will make their way anywhere. Knowledge will introduce you, but fine breeding will alone endear you, for, as I have often told you, politeness and pleasing manners are absolutely necessary to adorn all other good qualities and talents. Without them no knowledge, no perfection

whatsoever, is seen in its best light. Without good breeding the scholar is a pedant; the philosopher, a cynic; the soldier, a brute; and every man, disagreeable.

## XVIII

London, October 16, O. S., 1

DEAR BOY:

Caesar paid great attention to the art of speaking; he believed it necessary to possess but difficult to acquire. It can hardly be reduced to rules, your own good sense and observation will teach more of it than I can.

Politeness is kindness. If you wish to determine whether an act is polite, ask yourself whether kind. Do as you would be done by, is the simple method that I know. Observe carefully what gratifies you in others, and probably the same thing you will gratify them. If you are pleased with the complaisance and attention of others to your humors, your tastes, or your weaknesses, demand upon it the same complaisance and attention on your part to theirs will equally please them.

There is something ennobling in kindness, there is a real satisfaction that flows from courtesy to the one who bestows it. Many, in their selfishness or their hurry, never fully know such a blessing, which is above ordinary satisfactions, is open to all, and costs nothing.

Do not tell stories in company unless they are exceedingly applicable to the present subject of conversation.

Of all things banish egotism, and discriminate carefully in regaling people with your own personal concerns or private or family affairs; though

are interesting to you, they may be tedious to others. Whatever you think your own excellencies, do not display them in company, nor labor, as many do, to give a turn to the conversation which will supply you with an opportunity of exhibiting them. If they are real they will be discovered infallibly without your pointing them out yourself, and with much more advantage.

Never maintain an argument with heat and clamor, though you know yourself to be in the right, but give your opinion modestly and coolly, which is the only way to convince. I suggest ending your statements with the expression, *in my opinion*. It will encourage others to advance their opinions, and when you have heard them you may have occasion to modify yours. I have borrowed this rule from one of the world's great men.

Remember that there is a local propriety to be observed in all companies. The particular characters, the habits, the cant, of a company may give merit to a word or a gesture which would have none at all if divested of those accidental circumstances.

In this respect people commonly err, and, fond of something that has entertained them in one group and under certain circumstances, repeat it with emphasis where it is either insipid, or, it may be, offensive by being ill-timed or misplaced. Nay, they often use this preamble: "I heard a funny story the other day," or, "I will tell you the best thing in the world." Such introductions raise expectations which, when disappointed, make the relator look very deservedly like a fool.



It is of value in estimating the character of a person, whether a man or a woman, to find out his dominant excellence and his controlling weakness. Men have various objects in which they excel, or believe they excel, or wish to excel, and yet are doubtful whether they do or not.

You will easily discover a man's prevailing vanity by observing his favorite topic of conversation; in general a man talks most of what he wishes to be thought to excel in.

The late Sir Robert Walpole, who was certainly an able man, was in no doubt on that point, but his weakness was to be thought to give a polite and happy turn to gallantry, of which he had undoubtedly less than any man living; it was his favorite and frequent subject of conversation, which proved to those who had penetration that it was his greatest weakness.

Most women have but one object, which is their beauty. Nature has rarely formed a woman ugly enough to be insensible to flattery upon her person; if her face is so shocking that in some degree she must be conscious of it, her figure and air, she trusts, make ample amends for it. If her figure is deformed, her face, she thinks, counterbalances it. If they are both bad, she comforts herself with the belief that she has graces, a certain manner, still more engaging than beauty. This truth is evident from the studied and elaborate dress of the ugliest women in the world. An undoubted, uncontested, conscious beauty is, of all women, the least sensible

to flattery on that head; she knows it is her due, and is therefore obliged to nobody for giving it to her.

Do not mistake me, and think that I mean to recommend the use of flattery. I do not advocate obtaining goods by false pretenses. But there is no living in the world without a complaisant indulgence for people's weaknesses and innocent, though absurd, vanities. If a man has a mind to be thought wiser than he is, and a woman handsomer than she is, their error is a comfort to themselves and innocent with regard to other people, and I would rather make them my friends by indulging them in it, as far as honesty will permit, than to make them my enemies by endeavoring to undeceive them.

There are little attentions, likewise, which are infinitely engaging, and which sensibly affect that pride and self-love which is inseparable from human nature, as they are unquestioned proofs of the regard and consideration which we have for the person to whom we pay them, as, for example, to observe the little habits, the likings, and the antipathies of our friends, and then to take care to provide them with the one, and to shield them from the other.

Attention to such trifles contributes legitimately, I believe, to the happiness of those about us. It wins friends; it promotes companionships; and there is nothing in the world but people, and nothing in people but companionship.

## XIX

London, February 9, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

You will receive this letter not from a Secretary of State, but from a man in private life; for whom, on account of his years, quiet is as fit and necessary as labor and activity are for you at your age and will be for a long time to come. Last Saturday I resigned the Seals to the King, who parted with me most graciously, and I may add, for he said so himself, with regret. As I retire from hurry to quiet, and to enjoy the comforts of private and social life, you will easily imagine that I have no thoughts of opposition, or meddling with business. I am now happy, but I found that I could not be so in my former public station.

As I like your correspondence better than that of all the kings, princes, and Ministers in Europe I shall now have leisure to carry it on more regularly. My letters to you will be written by me, and, I hope, read by you, with pleasure, which I believe seldom happens reciprocally to letters written from and to a Secretary.

As I put behind me the allurements of official life I am impelled to the confession that pride has been no small factor in my seeking preferment. It is so with all men. We live in our pride more than we admit, even to ourselves. To guard, however, against that inflation which so ill becomes us, I have made it a rule to search myself, and upon the



slightest suspicion of overesteem I have indulged in self-castigation, ever with this reflection: If my head is turned by the power of this office, then the office is bigger than I; if not, then I am bigger than the office. This is in itself an appeal to the pride but it has served me well, especially in my younger days; otherwise I might have made myself at times quite absurd, and, much worse, might have alienated some friends who have been not only prized but useful.



## XX

Bath, February 16, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

The first use that I made of my liberty was to come hither, where I arrived yesterday. My health needed some repairs which these waters never fail to make.

I must observe to you upon this occasion that the satisfaction which I expect to find in my new library will be chiefly owing to my having employed my time well at your age. If I had employed it still better my satisfaction would now be complete, but, however, I planted, while young, that degree of learning which is now my refuge and my shelter. Make your plantings more extensive and they will more than pay you for your trouble.

I do not regret the time that I passed in pleasures; they were seasonable; they were the pleasures of youth, and I enjoyed them. If I had not, I should probably overvalue them now, but acquainted with them as I am, I know their real value and how much they are generally overrated.

Nor do I regret the time that I have passed in business, for the same reason; those who see only the outside of it imagine that it has hidden charms, after which they pant, and nothing but acquaintance can undeceive them.

I, who have been behind the scenes, both of pleasure and business, and have seen all the springs and pulleys of those decorations which astonish and

dazzle the audience, retire, not only without regret, but with contentment and satisfaction. What I do regret, and ever shall, however, is the time that I lost in mere idleness. This is the common effect of the inconsiderateness of youth, against which I beg you will be most carefully on your guard. Every moment may be put to some use, and with much more pleasure than if unemployed.

Do not imagine that by the employment of time I mean an uninterrupted application to serious studies. No; pleasures are, at proper times, both necessary and useful; they fashion and form you for the world; they teach you characters, and show you the human heart in its unguarded moments. I have known many people, from laziness of mind, to go through both pleasure and business with equal inattention, neither enjoying the one, nor transacting the other; thinking themselves men of pleasure because they mingled with those who were, and men of business because they had business to do though they did not do it. Whatever your task, do it to the purpose; do it thoroughly, not superficially; go to the bottom of things. Anything half done, or half known, is, to my mind, not done or known at all.

There is hardly any place or any company where you may not gain knowledge if you please; almost everybody knows some one thing and is glad to talk upon it. "Seek, and ye shall find," applies to this world as well as the next. See everything, inquire into everything; you may excuse your curiosity, and the questions you ask, which otherwise might be

though impertinent, by your manner of asking them, for most things depend a great deal upon manner. For example: *I am afraid I am very troublesome with my questions; but nobody else can inform me so well as you.*

Now that you are in the country of the Lutherans, go to their churches and observe the manner of their public worship; attend to their ceremonies and inquire the meaning of every one of them. And, as you will soon understand German well enough, attend to their sermons, and observe the manner of preaching. Inform yourself of their church government, whether it resides in the sovereign, or in consistories, or synods; whence arises the maintenance of their clergy—whether from tithes, as in England, or from voluntary contributions, or from State pensions.

Do the same thing when you are in Roman Catholic countries; go to the churches, see all the ceremonies, ask the meaning of them, have the terms explained to you. Inform yourself of the religious orders, their founders, their rules, their vows, their habits, their revenues. But when you frequent places of public worship—and I would have you go to all the different ones you meet with—remember that, however erroneous the worship, it is not an object of laughter or jest. Honest error is to be pitied, never ridiculed. The object of all the public worship in the world is the same; it is that great, eternal Being who created everything. The different manners of worship are by no means subjects for ridicule. Each sect thinks itself the best;



and there is no infallible judge in the world to decide which is the best.

I had almost forgotten one thing that I would recommend as an object for your curiosity and information, which is, the administration of justice. As it is always carried on in open court, you may go and freely observe its workings, and I would have you do so with attention.



## XXI

Bath, February 22, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

Every excellence, as well as every virtue, has its kindred weakness or vice; and, if carried beyond certain bounds, sinks into the one or the other. Generosity often runs into profusion, economy into avarice, courage into rashness, caution into timidity: so much so that I believe there is more judgment required for the proper conduct of virtues than for avoiding the opposite vices.

In its true light vice is so deformed that it shocks us at first sight, and would hardly ever seduce us if it did not first wear the mask of some virtue. But virtue is in itself so beautiful that it charms us immediately, engages us more and more upon further acquaintance, and, as with other beauties, we think excess impossible; it is here that judgment is necessary to moderate and direct the effects of an excellent cause.

I shall apply this reasoning at present not to any particular virtue, but to an excellence which for want of judgment is often the cause of blamable effects; I mean, learning, which, if not accompanied with sound judgment, frequently carries us into error, pride, and pedantry.

Some learned men, proud of their attainments, only speak to decide, and give judgment without appeal. The consequence is that mankind, provoked by the insult, and injured by the oppression, revolt,

and in order to shake off the tyranny even call the lawful authority in question. The more you know, the more modest you should be; and, by the way, modesty is the surest means of gratifying vanity. Even where you are sure, seem rather doubtful; represent, but do not pronounce; and if you would convince others, seem open to conviction yourself.

Some persons, to show their learning, or often from the prejudices of a school of education in which they hear of nothing else, speak of the ancients as something more than men, and the moderns as something less. They are never without a classic or two in their pockets; they stick to the old good sense; they read none of the modern trash; and will show you plainly that no improvement has been made in any art or science these last seventeen hundred years. I would by no means have you disown your acquaintance with the ancients, but still less would I have you brag of an exclusive intimacy with them. Speak of the moderns without contempt, and of the ancients without idolatry; judge them all by their merits but not by their ages, and if you happen to have a classic in your pocket neither show it nor mention it.

A few great scholars most absurdly draw all their maxims, both for public and private life, from what they call parallel cases recorded by the ancient authors, without considering in the first place that there never were, since the creation of the world, two cases exactly parallel; and, in the next place, that no case was ever known by an historian with every one of its circumstances; and all the conditions

must be known in order to be reasoned from. Reason upon the case itself and the several circumstances that attend it, and act accordingly, but not from the authority of ancient poets or historians. Take into consideration, if you please, cases seemingly analogous, but take them as helps only, not as guides. We are really so prejudiced by our educations that, as the ancients deified their heroes, we deify their madmen; of which, with all due regard to antiquity, I take Leonidas and Curtius to have been distinguished examples. And yet a solid pedant would, in a speech in Parliament, relative to a tax of two-pence in the pound upon some commodity or other, quote those two heroes as models of what we ought to do and suffer for our country.

There is another species of learned men who, though less dogmatic and supercilious, are not less impertinent. These are the communicative and shining pedants who adorn their conversation with happy quotations of Greek and Latin, and who have contracted such a familiarity with ancient authors that they call them by certain names or epithets denoting intimacy: as *old* Homer; *that sly rogue* Horace; *Maro*, instead of Virgil; and *Naso*, instead of Ovid.

These are often imitated by coxcombs who have no education at all, but who have learned by heart some names and some scraps of the old authors, which they retail in all companies in the hope of passing for scholars.

If therefore you would avoid the accusation of pedantry on the one hand or the suspicion of



ignorance on the other, abstain from learned ostentation. Speak the language of the company that you are in; speak it purely and unlarded with any other. Never seem wiser or more learned than the people you are with. Wear your learning, like your watch, in a private pocket; do not pull it out and exhibit it merely to show that you have it. If you are asked the time of day, tell it, but do not proclaim it hourly and unasked, like a watchman.

Upon the whole, remember that learning, I mean Greek and Roman learning, is a useful and necessary ornament; but at the same time carefully avoid those errors and abuses which I have mentioned, and which too often attend it.

Remember, too, that modern knowledge is more necessary than ancient, and that you would better know perfectly the present state of Europe than its past, though I would have you acquainted with both.



## XXII

Bath, March 9, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

I must, from time to time, remind you of what I have often recommended, and to which you cannot over-attend—to *sacrifice to the Graces*, a phrase I have borrowed from Plutarch's *Caius Marius*, where you will find these words:

Plato often used to say to Xenocrates, the philosopher, who was thought to have more than ordinary harshness of disposition, "I pray you, good Xenocrates, sacrifice to the Graces."

The same thing, said or done, when accompanied or abandoned by the Graces, produces radically different effects. The Graces prepare the way to the heart, and the heart has such an influence over the understanding that it is worth while to engage it in our interest: it is the whole of women, who are guided by nothing else, and it has so much to say with men that it commonly triumphs in every struggle with the understanding.

This being the case, aim at the heart. Intrinsic merit alone will not do; it will gain you the general esteem of all, but not the particular affection, that is, the heart, of any. To engage the affection of any one you must, over and above your general worth, have some special merit in his eyes brought about by services done or offered, by expressions of regard

and esteem, by attentions bestowed; and the graceful manner of doing these things opens the way to the heart, and facilitates, or rather insures, their effects.

From your own observation reflect what a disagreeable impression a stranger creates at first sight by a slovenly figure, an awkward address, an ungraceful manner of speaking, whether stuttering, monotony, muttering, or drawling; and consider how these defects prejudice you against him, though, for aught you know, he may have great intrinsic merit.

Consider, on the other hand, how much the opposites of these things prepossess you immediately in favor of those who are blessed with them. A thousand little things, not separately to be defined, conspire to form these Graces that always please. A proper degree of dress, a cleanly person, a distinct and properly varied manner of speaking, an harmonious voice, gentle motions, something open and cheerful in the countenance, but without vulgar laughing: all these things, and many others, are ingredients in the composition of that pleasing address which everybody feels though nobody can describe.

## XXIII

London, April 26, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

I am extremely pleased with your communication on the history of the Reformation, one of those important eras that deserve your utmost attention, and of which you cannot be too minutely informed. You have doubtless considered the causes of that great event, and have observed that disappointment and resentment had a much greater share in it than religious zeal or an abhorrence of the errors and abuses of popery.

Luther, an Augustin monk, enraged that his order, and consequently that he himself, had not the exclusive privilege of selling indulgences, and that the Dominicans were let into a share of that profitable but infamous trade, turns reformer and exclaims against the abuses, the corruption, and the idolatry of the Church of Rome, which were certainly gross enough for him to have perceived long before, but in which he had at least acquiesced till what he called the rights, that is, the profit, of his order came to be touched. The Church of Rome furnished him ample matter for complaint and reformation, and he laid hold of it ably.

This seems to me the true cause of that great and necessary work, but, whatever the cause, the effect was good, and the Reformation spread itself by its own truth and fitness; was conscientiously received by great numbers in Germany and other



countries; and was soon mixed up with the politics of princes, and, as it always happens in religious disputes, became the specious covering of injustice and ambition.

Under the pretense of crushing heresy, as it was called, the House of Austria meant to extend and establish its power in the empire; on the other hand, many Protestant princes, under the pretense of extirpating idolatry, meant to enlarge their dominions or increase their privileges. These objects among the chiefs on both sides, much more than religious motives, continued what were called the religious wars in Germany almost uninterruptedly till the affairs of the two religions were finally settled by the treaty of Münster.

Were we to trace historical events to their real causes I fear we would find them not much more noble or disinterested than Luther's disappointed avarice, and therefore I look with some contempt upon those refined and sagacious historians who ascribe all, even the most common, events to some deep political cause, whereas mankind is made up of inconsistencies, and no man acts invariably up to his dominant character. The wisest man sometimes acts weakly, and the weakest sometimes wisely. Our jarring passions, our variable humors, nay, our greater or less degree of health and spirits, produce such contradictions in our conduct that I believe those are often mistaken who ascribe our actions to the most seemingly obvious motives, and I am convinced that a light supper, a good night's sleep, and



a fine morning have sometimes made a hero of a man who, by an indigestion, a restless night, and a rainy day, would have proved a coward.

Our best conjectures therefore as to the true springs of action are uncertain, and the acts themselves are all that we may learn from history. That Caesar was murdered by twenty-three conspirators I have no doubt, but I do doubt that their love of liberty and of country was their sole motive, or even the principal one, and I dare say, if the truth were known, that we should find many other motives concurred, even in the great Brutus himself, such as pride, envy, personal pique, and disappointment. Nay, I cannot help carrying my contention still further and extending it to historical facts themselves, at least to most of the circumstances with which they are related; every-day experience confirms me in this incredulity. Do we ever hear the most recent fact related exactly in the same way by the several people who were eye-witnesses of it? No. One mistakes, another misrepresents, and others warp it a little to their own turn of mind or private views. A man who has been concerned in a transaction will not record it fairly, and a man who has not, is unable to. The Gospels do not fully agree with one another.

Notwithstanding all this uncertainty, history is not the less necessary to be known, as the best histories are taken for granted and are the frequent subjects both of conversation and writing. Though I am convinced that Caesar's ghost never appeared to Brutus, yet I should be much ashamed to be

ignorant of the incident as related by the historians of those times. Thus the pagan theology is universally received as matter for writing and conversation, though not now believed by anybody, and we talk of Jupiter, Mars, Apollo, as gods, though we know that if they ever existed at all it was only as mere mortal men. This historical pyrrhonism, then, proves nothing against the study and knowledge of history, which of all studies is the most necessary for a man who is to live in the world. It only points out to us that we should not be too decisive and peremptory, but cautious, rather, how we draw inferences from remote facts, partially or ignorantly related, of which we can at best but imperfectly guess, and the motives of which we certainly do not know.

Bolingbroke in the fourth of his *Letters on the Study of History* has an original and instructive passage in his usual style, which reads:

When the brain is well heated, and devotion or vanity, the semblance of virtue or real vice, and, above all, disputes and contests, have inspired that complication of passions we term zeal. . . . history becomes very often a lying panegyric or a lying satire; for different nations, or different parties in the same nation, belie one another without any respect for truth, as they murder one another without any regard to right, or sense of humanity. Religious zeal may boast this horrid advantage over civil zeal, that the effects of it have been more sanguinary,

and the malice more unrelenting. In another respect they are more alike, and keep a nearer proportion: different religions have not been quite so barbarous to one another as sects of the same religion; and, in like manner, nation has had better quarter from nation than party from party.

The testimonies of ancient history must necessarily be weaker than those of modern times, since all testimony is the weaker the more remote it is from us. I would therefore advise you to study ancient history, in general, as other people do; that is, not to be ignorant of any of those incidents which are universally received upon the faith of the best historians, and, whether true or false, you have them as other people have them.

Modern history, I mean particularly that of the last three centuries, is what I would have you apply yourself to with the greatest attention and exactness. In this period the probability of coming at the truth is much greater, as the testimonies are much more recent, and anecdotes, memoirs, and original letters often aid.



## XXIV

London, May 10, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

I suppose that this letter will find you just returning from Dresden. What inclination for Courts the taste of them may have given you, I cannot tell. A mere courtier, without parts or knowledge, is the most frivolous and contemptible of beings: on the other hand, a man of parts and knowledge who acquires the easy and noble manners of a Court is almost perfect.

It is a trite, commonplace observation that Courts are seats of falsehood and dissimulation, which, like many other such observations, is overdrawn. Falsehood and dissimulation are certainly to be found at Courts, but where are they not to be found? Cottages have them as well as Courts, and with worse manners. A farmer will contrive and practice as many tricks to overreach his neighbor at the next market, or to supplant him in the favor of the squire, as any courtier will do to ingratiate himself with his prince. Whatever poets may write or fools believe of rural innocence and truth, and of the perfidy of Courts, the fact remains that shepherds and Ministers are men; their natures and passions are the same; they differ only in their modes.

Having mentioned commonplace observations, let me particularly caution you against either using, believing, or approving them. They are the stock



in trade of wittings and coxcombs; those of real wit have a contempt for them.

Religion is one of the favorite topics with those who do not think. They affirm that it is all priestcraft, and an invention of priests, of whatever sect, devised for their own profit. From this absurd and false principle flow the commonplace, insipid jokes and insults offered the clergy. With these people every priest is either an avowed or a concealed unbeliever, drunkard, and what not, whereas I conceive that priests are like other men, and neither the better nor the worse for wearing a gown or a surplice, although by affecting it they separate themselves from their fellow-men, to their own disadvantage and that of their calling; but if they are different from other people, probably the balance is on the side of religion and morality, or at least on the side of decency, from their education and manner of life.

Another common topic for false wit and cold raillery is matrimony. It is a common statement that every man and wife hate each other cordially, whatever they may pretend in public to the contrary, yet I presume that men and their wives neither love nor hate each other the more upon account of the form of marriage service which has been said over them. The cohabitation, indeed, which follows matrimony makes them either love or hate more, accordingly as they respectively deserve it, but that would be true between any man and woman who lived together without being married.

Scoffing at religion and the institution of

marriage is not infrequently heard, but no one has ever invented an improvement upon the one or the other.

## XXV

London, May 17, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

Your first reception at Court has, I find, been very favorable; and his Polish Majesty has distinguished you. I hope you received that mark of distinction with respect and steadiness. You should not be dazzled by superior rank; should know and pay all the respect that is due to it; but without being disconcerted; and should converse just as easily with a king as with one of his subjects. That is the great advantage of being introduced young into good company, and being used early to converse with one's superiors.

How many men have I seen who, after having had the full benefit of an English education, first at school, and then at the University, when they have been presented to the King, did not know whether they stood upon their heads or their heels! If the King spoke to them, they were annihilated; they trembled, endeavored to put their hands in their pockets and missed them, let their hats fall, and were ashamed to take them up; in short they put themselves into every attitude but an easy and natural one.

The characteristic of a well-bred man is to converse with his inferiors without insolence, and with his superiors with respect and ease. He talks to kings without concern; he trifles with women of the first condition with familiarity and gaiety but

respect, and converses with his equals, whether he is acquainted with them or not, upon general, common topics, that are not, however, quite frivolous, without the least disquietude or awkwardness, for neither mind nor body can appear to advantage unless it is perfectly easy. Good-bye for this time, and God bless you.



## XXVI

London, June 21, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

Your bad enunciation runs so much in my mind and gives me such real concern that it will be the subject of this letter and, I fear, of many more. I congratulate both you and myself that I am informed of it in time to correct it, as I hope. If this ungraceful and disagreeable manner of speaking had either by your negligence or mine become habitual to you, as in a couple of years more it would, what a figure you would have made in company or in a public assembly! Who would have liked you in the one or have attended to you in the other? Read what Cicero and Quintilian say of enunciation, and see what a stress they lay upon the gracefulness of it.

Men are much oftener led by their hearts than by their understandings. The way to the heart is through the senses. Please the eyes and ears, and the work is half done. I have frequently known a man's fortune decided forever by his first address. If it is pleasing, people are hurried involuntarily into a persuasion that he has merit, even if he has not; on the other hand, if it is ungraceful they are immediately prejudiced against him and unwilling to allow him the merit which he has. Nor is this sentiment so unjust and unreasonable as it may seem; if a man has parts he must know of what infinite consequence it is to him to have a graceful manner

of speaking and a gentle, pleasing address, and he should cultivate them to the utmost.

What is the constant and just observation as to all actors upon the stage? Is it not that those who have the best sense always speak the best, though they may happen not to have the best voices? They will speak plainly, distinctly, and with the proper emphasis, be their voices ever so bad.

Had Roscius spoken quickly, thickly, and ungracefully, I will answer for it that Cicero would not have thought him worth the oration which he made in his favor.

Words were given us with which to communicate our ideas, and there must be something inconceivably absurd in uttering them in such a manner that people cannot understand them, or will not desire to understand them.

When you speak, take care to open your mouth; to articulate every word distinctly. Read aloud to yourself and tune your utterance to your own ear; read at first much more slowly than you need to, in order to correct yourself of that shameful trick of speaking faster than you ought. In short, make it your business, your study, and your pleasure to speak well.

## XXVII

London, September 27, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

Pray let no quibbles of lawyers, no refinements of casuists, break into plain notions of right and wrong which every man's reason and plain common sense suggest to him. To do as you would be done by is the sure and undisputed rule of morality and justice. Stick to that, and be convinced that whatever breaks into it in any degree, however speciously it may be turned, and however puzzling it may be to answer it, is, notwithstanding, false in itself, unjust, sometimes criminal.

I do not know of a crime in the world which is not by the casuists among the Jesuits allowed in some cases, or even in many, not to be criminal. The principles first laid down by them are often specious and the reasonings plausible, but the conclusion is always a lie, for it is contrary to that evident and undeniable rule of justice which I have mentioned of not doing to anyone what you would not have him do to you.

However, these refined pieces of sophistry, being very convenient and welcome to people's passions and appetites, afford an excuse for them to gladly accept the indulgence without desiring to detect the fallacy of the reasoning, and, indeed, many people are not able to do it, which makes the publication of such quibblings and refinements the more pernicious.



I am no skillful casuist nor subtle disputant, and yet I would undertake to justify the profession of a highwayman, step by step, and so plausibly as to make many ignorant people ready to embrace the profession as innocent, if not laudable; and I could puzzle people of some degree of learning to answer me point by point. Bishop Berkeley, a worthy, ingenious, and learned man, has written a book to prove that there is no such thing as matter, and that nothing exists but ideas—that you and I only fancy ourselves eating, drinking, and sleeping; that we think we have flesh and blood, legs and arms, but that we are only spirit. His arguments are, strictly speaking, unanswerable, but I am so far from being convinced by them that I am determined to go on eating and drinking, walking and riding, in order to keep that *matter*, of which I so mistakenly imagine my body to consist, in as good condition as possible.

Common sense, which in truth is very uncommon, is the best sense I know of: abide by it; it will counsel you best. For your amusement read and hear ingenious systems and nice questions subtilely agitated with all the refinements that warm imaginations suggest, but consider them only as exercises for the mind, and return always to settle with common sense.



## XXVIII

Bath, October 19, O. S., 1748.

DEAR BOY:

Having pointed out what sort of company you should keep, I will now give you some rules for your conduct in it—rules which my own experience and observation enable me to lay down with some degree of confidence.

I shall say nothing with regard to your bodily carriage and address, but leave them to the care of your dancing-master, and your own attention to the best models: remember, however, that they are of consequence.

You may speak often, but never long at a time. If you do not please your hearers, at least make sure not to tire them.

Tell stories seldom, and never unless they are apt and short. Omit every circumstance that is not material, and beware of digressions.

Never hold anybody by the button or the hand in order to be heard out; if people are not willing to hear, you would much better hold your tongue than to hold them.

Most long talkers single out some one unfortunate man in company, commonly him whom they observe to be the most silent, or their next neighbor. This is excessively ill-bred, and in some degree a fraud, conversation stock being a joint and common property. But on the other hand, if one of these unmerciful talkers lays hold of you, hear him with

at least seeming attention, for nothing will please him more than a patient hearing, as nothing would hurt him more than to have you leave him in the midst of his discourse or to uncover your impatience under your affliction.

In mixed companies avoid as much as you can argumentative, polemic conversation, which, though it should not, yet certainly does for a time indispose the contending parties toward each other, and if the controversy grows warm and noisy, endeavor to put an end to it by some levity or joke.

If you mention your relatives at all, say as little as possible regarding them; if they are unknown to your hearer he is bored; and if known, you may be suspected of family pride, which is never quite agreeable to a member of another family. There are three subjects which are taboo—your ailments, your underwear, and your relatives.

Above all things, and upon all occasions, avoid speaking of yourself as far as you can. Such is the natural vanity of our hearts that it perpetually breaks out even in people of the best parts, and in all the various modes and figures of egotism.

Some abruptly speak advantageously of themselves without either pretense or provocation.

Others endeavor to proceed more artfully, and forge accusations against themselves in order to justify the exhibition of a catalogue of their many virtues. This thin veil of modesty drawn before vanity is too transparent to conceal it, even from those of moderate discernment.

Still others move more slyly, as they think, but, to my mind, more ridiculously. They confess themselves, not without some degree of shame and confusion, into all the cardinal virtues, by first degrading them into weaknesses, and then owning their misfortune in being made up of those weaknesses. *They cannot see people suffer without sympathizing with them and endeavoring to help. They cannot see people want without relieving them, though truly they cannot afford it. They cannot help speaking the truth, though they know the imprudence of it.*

This sounds too ridiculous, almost, for the stage, and yet, take my word for it, you will frequently meet with it on the common stage of the world. And here I will observe, by the way, that you will now and then meet with characters so extravagant that a discreet playwright would not venture to set them upon the stage in their true and high coloring.

Vanity is so strong in human nature that it descends even to the lowest objects, and one often sees people angling for praise when, admitting all they say to be true, no just praise is to be caught. One man affirms that he has ridden post a hundred miles in six hours; probably it is a lie; but supposing it to be true; what then? Why, he is a very good post-boy; that is all. Another asserts, and probably not without oaths, that he has drunk six or eight bottles of wine at a sitting; out of charity I will believe him a liar; for if I do not, I must think him a beast.

Such, and a thousand more, are the follies and extravagancies which vanity draws a person into.



They always defeat their own purpose, and, as Waller says, upon another subject,

render him despised,  
Where he endeavors to be prized.

The only sure way of avoiding these evils is never to speak of yourself at all. But when historically you are obliged to mention yourself, take care not to drop one single word that can directly or indirectly be construed as fishing for applause. Be your character what it will, it will be known, and nobody will take it upon your own word. Never imagine that anything you can say yourself will varnish your defects, or add luster to your perfections; but, on the contrary, it may make the former more glaring and the latter more obscure, and nine times out of ten it will. If you are silent upon the subject of yourself neither envy, indignation, nor ridicule will obstruct or allay the applause which you really deserve, but if you publish your own panegyric upon any occasion or in any shape, however artfully dressed or disguised, all will conspire against you, and you will be disappointed of the very end at which you aim. Moreover, there are few greater obstacles to progress than jealousy; be careful therefore not to arouse it.

Always look people in the face when you speak to them; not doing so is thought to imply conscious guilt of some sort; besides that, you lose the advantage of observing by their countenances what impression your discourse makes upon them. In order



to know people's real sentiments I trust much more to my eyes than to my ears, for people can say whatever they have a mind I should hear, but they can seldom help looking what they have no intention that I should know.

Neither retail nor receive scandal willingly; though the defamation of others may, for the present, gratify the malignity or the pride of our hearts, cool reflection will draw unfavorable conclusions from such a practice, and in the case of scandal, as in that of robbery, the receiver is thought as bad as the thief.

Mimicry, which is the favorite amusement of little minds, is in the utmost contempt with great ones. It is the lowest and most illiberal of buffoonery. Pray neither practice it yourself nor applaud it in others.

I need not, I believe, advise you to adapt your conversation to the people with whom you are conversing, for I suppose, without this caution, you would not have spoken upon the same subject and in the same manner to a Minister of state, a bishop, a philosopher, a captain, and a woman. A man of the world must, like the chameleon, be able to assume different hues, which is by no means criminal or abject, but a necessary complaisance, for it relates merely to manners, and not to morals.

One word only as to swearing or cursing. You may sometimes hear people interlard their discourses with oaths by way of adornment, but you will observe that those who do so are rarely those who contribute in any degree to give company the denom-

ination of good company; they are people of low education. Moreover, the practice not only has no recommendation, but is silly and illiberal, and dwarfs the vocabulary.

I admonish you, as you value your popularity, to converse and not to lecture. Do not mistake the parlor for a platform. And within bounds learn to be a talented listener.

All these rules, however carefully observed, will lose half their effect if unaccompanied by the Graces. Whatever you say with a supercilious, cynical face, or an embarrassed countenance, or a disconcerted grin, will be ill-received. If, into the bargain, you mumble or do not enunciate distinctly, your efforts will be still worse received. If your air and address are awkward you may be esteemed provided you have great intrinsic merit, but you will never please, and without pleasing you will rise but heavily. Venus was synonymous with the Graces, who were always supposed to accompany her; Horace tells us that even Youth and Mercury (the god of arts and eloquence) would not go anywhere without her.

## XXIX

London, January 10, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

Now that you are going a little more into the world I will take this occasion to explain my intentions as to your future expenses, that you may know what you have to expect from me, and make your plans accordingly.

I shall neither deny nor grudge you any money that may be necessary for your improvement or your pleasures; I mean the pleasures of a rational being. Under the head of improvement, I mean the best books and the best masters, cost what they will; I also mean all the expense of lodgings, coach, dress, etc., which, according to the several places where you may be, shall be respectively necessary to enable you to keep the best company.

Under the head of rational pleasures I include: First, proper charities, to real and benevolent objects; Second, proper presents, to those to whom you are obliged, or whom you desire to oblige, and small but frequent remembrances to your companions; Third, a conformity of expense to that of the company you keep; as in public spectacles, your share of little entertainments and other incidental calls of good company.

The specific articles that I never will supply are a profusion of low riot, and an idle lavishness of negligence and laziness. A fool squanders away without credit or advantage to himself more than a



man of sense spends with both. The latter employs his money as he does his time, and never spends a shilling of the one nor a minute of the other but in something that is useful or rationally pleasing to himself or to others. The former buys what he does not need, and does not purchase what he does need. He cannot withstand the charms of a toy-shop; snuff-boxes, watches, and heads of canes are his destruction. His servants and the tradesmen conspire with his own indolence to cheat him; and in a brief space of time he is astonished, in the midst of all his ridiculous superfluities, to find himself in want of all the real comforts and necessities of life.

With care and method the smallest fortune will supply all necessary expenses, and without them the largest fortune will not. As far as you can, pay ready money for everything you buy, and avoid bills. Where you must have bills, as for food and clothes, pay them regularly and at the first practicable moment, and with your own hand as a matter of fellowship. Small tradesmen need prompt payments. It makes their lives easier; they feel more kindly to you, and as a consequence you secure better attention and superior value. In passing, it is a fine bit of benevolence to give the preference to the smaller dealers, to any one of whom your custom may mean much.

Never from a mistaken notion of economy buy a thing you do not want because it is cheap, or from a silly pride because it is dear.

Be punctilious in the prompt repayment to your companions of borrowings and other obligations,



however small. Neglect in this matter sets badly, and if you should happen to forget to make return, your character might be in question.

During your stay in Berlin I expect you to inform yourself thoroughly of the present state of the civil, military, and ecclesiastical government, particularly of the military, which is upon a better footing in Prussia than in any other country in Europe. You will attend at the reviews, see the troops exercise, and inquire into the number of soldiers and the companies of the respective regiments of horse, foot, and dragoons; the number and titles of the commissioned and non-commissioned officers in the several troops and companies; and, also, take care to learn the technical military terms in the German language, for, though you are not to be a military man, yet these matters are so frequently the subject of conversation that you will be more companionable if you are familiar with them.

You must also inform yourself of the reformation which Frederick the Great has lately made in the law, by which he has both lessened the number and shortened the duration of lawsuits; a great work, and worthy of so great a prince. As he is indisputably the greatest ruler in Europe every part of his government deserves your diligent inquiry and serious attention.

## XXX

DEAR BOY:

I persuade myself that your stay at Venice will be properly employed in seeing all that is to be seen at that extraordinary place, and in conversing with people who can inform you of the constitution of the government.

But the important point is Turin, for there I propose for you a long stay to pursue your studies, learn your exercises, and form your manners.

I own that I am not without anxiety for the consequences of your stay there, which must be either very good or very bad. Wherever you have been hitherto you have conversed chiefly with people wiser and more discreet than yourself, and have been equally out of the way of bad advice and bad example, but in the Academy at Turin you will probably meet with both, considering the variety of young fellows of about your own age. Among them some will be dissipated and idle, others vicious and profligate. I believe you have sagacity enough to distinguish between good and bad characters, and both sense and virtue enough to shun the latter and connect yourself with the former.

One year is the longest period that I have in mind for your sojourn at Turin, and that year, if you employ it well, perfects you; twelve months more of your late application will complete your classical studies. You will be, likewise, master of your exercises in that time, and will have formed

yourself so well at that Court as to be fit to appear advantageously at any other. These should be the happy effects of your year's stay at Turin, but if either ill advice or bad example seduce you, you are ruined forever.

I look upon this as your decisive year of probation. Go through it well, and you will be all-accomplished, and fixed in my tenderest affection forever, but, should the contagion of vice or idleness lay hold of you there, my hopes and consequently my favor, your fortune, your character, are all blasted, and you are undone.

The more I love you, from the good opinion that I now have of you, the greater will be my indignation if I should have reason to change it. In the past you have had every possible proof of my affection because you have deserved it, but when you cease to deserve it you may expect every possible mark of my resentment.

I will tell you what I expect and insist upon from you at Turin: First, that you pursue your classical and other studies every morning; Second, that you learn uninterruptedly your exercises, of riding, dancing, and fencing; Third, that you make yourself master of the Italian language; and Last, that you pass your evenings in the best company.

If you will but finish your year in this manner I have nothing further to ask of you, and I will give you everything that you ask of me. You shall after that be entirely your own master; I shall believe that you are safe; shall lay aside all authority over you; and friendship shall be our mutual

and only tie. Weigh this, I beg of you, deliberately in your own mind, and consider whether the application and the degree of restraint which I require but for one year more will not be amply repaid by all the advantages and the perfect liberty which you will receive at the end of it. God bless you! Good-bye!



## XXXI

London, May 15, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

This letter will, I hope, find you settled to your serious studies and your necessary exercises at Turin, after the hurry and dissipation of the Carnival at Venice.

I mean that your stay at Turin shall be a useful and ornamental period of your education, and I flatter myself that it will be so, but at the same time I must tell you that I have never before felt so much anxiety for you. While you are in danger I shall be in fear—and you are in danger at Turin. I am informed that there are now many English in the Academy, and I fear those are just so many dangers for you to encounter. Who they are I do not know, but I well know the general ill conduct, the indecent behavior, and the illiberal views of my young countrymen abroad, especially wherever they are in numbers together.

Ill example is of itself dangerous enough, but those who give it seldom stop there; they add their infamous exhortations and invitations, and if these fail they have recourse to ridicule, which is harder for one of your age and inexperience to withstand than either of the former. Be on your guard therefore against these batteries, which will be played upon you.

You are not sent abroad to converse with your own countrymen; among them, in general, you will

acquire little knowledge, no language, and, I am sure, no manners. I desire that you will form with them no connections, and no friendships, as they impudently call them, for they are, in truth, only combinations and conspiracies against good morals and good manners. In young people there is commonly a complaisance which makes them unwilling to refuse anything that is asked of them, and at the same time an ambition to please and shine in the company they keep; these causes produce the best effect in good company but the very worst in bad. If people had no vices but their own, they would not have so many. For my own part, I would sooner wear other people's clothes than their vices, and they would fit me just as well. I hope you will have none, but if ever you have I beg at least they may be all your own. Vices of adoption are, of all vices, the most disgraceful and unpardonable.

There are degrees in vices, as well as in virtues, and I must do my countrymen the justice to say that they generally take their vices in the lowest degree. Their pleasures of the table end in beastly drunkenness, low riot, broken windows, and very often, as they well deserve, broken bones. They game for the sake of the vice, not of the amusement, and therefore carry it to excess and undo their companions or are undone by them. By such conduct they put us to shame abroad, and come home the unimproved, illiberal, and ungentlemanly creatures that one daily sees in the park and on the streets, for one never meets them in good company,

where they have neither manners to present themselves nor merit to be received.

With the manners of footmen and grooms they assume their dress too, for you must have observed them on the streets here in dirty blue frocks, with oaken sticks in their hands, and their hair greasy, tucked up under their hats of an enormous size. Thus finished and adorned by their travels they become the disturbers of playhouses; they break the windows, and commonly the landlords, of the taverns where they drink; and are at once the support, the terror, and the victims of the doubtful houses they frequent. These poor, mistaken people think they shine, and so they do, indeed, as putrefaction shines, in the dark.

I am not now preaching to you, like an old fellow, upon either religious or moral texts: I am persuaded that you do not lack the best instruction of that kind, but I am advising you as a friend, as a man of the world, as one who would not have you old while you are yet young, but would have you take all the pleasures that reason points out and that decency warrants. I will therefore suppose, for argument's sake, that vices are perfectly innocent in themselves; they would still degrade, vilify, and sink those who practiced them; would obstruct their rising in the world by debasing their characters; and would give them a low turn of mind and manner absolutely inconsistent with their making any figure in upper life or great business.

What I have now said, together with your own good sense, is, I hope, sufficient to arm you against



the seductions, the invitations, and the exhortations of those unfortunate young people. On the other hand, when they would engage you in these schemes, content yourself with a decent but firm refusal; avoid controversy upon such plain points. You are too young to convert them, and, I trust, too wise to be converted by them. Shun them, not only in reality but even in appearance, if you would be well received in good company, for people will always be shy of receiving any man who comes from a place where the plague rages, let him look ever so healthy.

Let me recur to a phase of this subject of which I have spoken to you more plainly than I shall write. Keep ever in mind, my dear son, how great is the risk to your health of a false step among the women. Three-quarters of the loathsome sex diseases are contracted in doubtful houses, but exclusiveness does not insure immunity; indeed, these afflictions are most common in the abodes of luxury. One can never count upon escape. And the wrecks from even a single folly are to be seen everywhere. Men pay the penalty ten, twenty, forty years after the fact, and they pay in the hardest coin—insanity, imbecility, death by inches, suffering of innocent wives, blindness of unoffending children, “unto the third and fourth generation.” And let me again warn you against the use of liquor while among women, lest your judgment as well as theirs be dissolved, and unhappiness result to them, or to you, or to both, but whatever you do, I trust you will not be so unfair, so unmanly as to endeavor to obtain favors



from them by the use of liquor. Good-bye, my dear child! Consider seriously the importance of the next year to your character, your health, your figure, and your fortune.

## XXXII

London, September 22, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

If I had faith in philters and love potions I should suspect that you had given a powder to Sir Charles Williams, judging by the manner in which he speaks of you. It will be easy for you to imagine how many questions I asked, and how narrowly I sifted him; he answered me just as I could have wished, till, satisfied entirely with his account of your character and learning, I inquired into other matters, intrinsically indeed of less consequence, but still of great moment; I mean your address, manners, and air.

He told me that in company you are frequently most *provokingly* inattentive and absent, and that you neglect your person and dress to a degree unpardonable at any age, and especially so at yours.

These things, however immaterial they may seem to people who do not know the world and the nature of mankind, give me great concern. No one thing is more offensive to a company than inattention and *distraction*. No man is *distracted* with the man he fears, or the woman he loves; which is a proof that every man can get the better of *distraction* when he thinks it worth while. For my own part, I would rather be in company with a dead man than with an absent one, for if the dead man gives me no pleasure, at least he shows me no

contempt, whereas the absent man, silently indeed, but very plainly, tells me that he does not think me worth his attention.

You know by experience that I grudge no expense in your education, but I will positively not supply you with a flapper. You may read in Dr. Swift the description of these flappers, and the use they were to your friends the Laputans, whose minds, Gulliver says, are so taken up with intense speculations that they neither speak nor attend to the discourses of others unless roused by some external action upon the organs of speech and hearing, for which reason those who can afford it keep a flapper in their family as one of their domestics, and never make visits without him. This flapper is likewise employed diligently to attend his master in his walks, and upon occasion to give a soft flap upon his eyes, because he is always so wrapped up in cogitation that he is in manifest danger of falling down every precipice and bouncing his head against every post, and, in the streets, of jostling others or being jostled himself.

I give you fair warning that when we meet, if you are absent in mind I will soon be absent in body, since it will be impossible for me to stay in the room. I cannot bear inattention—it would endanger my health.

You have often observed Lyttelton's distinguished abstraction and clumsiness. Wrapped up, like a Laputan, in intense thought, or possibly in no thought at all, he does not know his most intimate acquaintance by sight, or answers him as if they

were at cross-purposes. He leaves his hat in one room, his sword in another, and would leave his shoes in a third if his buckles, though awry, did not save them; his legs and arms are awkwardly managed; and his head, always hanging upon one shoulder, perhaps because it is not well-balanced, seems to have received the first stroke upon a block. I sincerely value and esteem him for his parts, learning, and virtue, but I cannot love him in company.

This will be universally the case in common life with every pre-occupied, awkward man, whatever may be his real merit and knowledge.

These things are by no means trifles; they are of greatest consequence to those who are to be thrown into the great world and who would make a figure or a fortune in it. It is not sufficient to deserve well; one must please well, too. Bungling, disagreeable merit will never carry anybody far. Wherever you find a good dancing-master, pray let him put you upon your haunches, not so much for the sake of dancing, as for coming into a room and presenting yourself gracefully. Women, whom you ought to endeavor to please, cannot forgive a vulgar or deficient air and gestures. The generality of men are like them, and are equally taken by the same exterior graces.

Good-bye, my dear child!



## XXXIII

London, September 27, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

A vulgar, ordinary way of thinking, acting, or speaking implies a low education, and a habit of low company. Young people contract it at school or among servants, but after they frequent good company they must lack attention and observation very much if they do not lay it quite aside. The various kinds of vulgarisms are infinite; I cannot pretend to point them out to you, but I will give you some samples by which you may guess the rest.

A vulgar man is captious and jealous; eager and impetuous about trifles. He suspects that he is slighted and thinks everything that is said is meant for him; if the company happens to laugh, he is persuaded they laugh at him; he grows angry and testy, says something impertinent, and draws himself into a scrape by showing what he calls a proper spirit, and asserting himself.

A man of breeding does not suppose himself to be either the sole or the principal object of the thoughts, looks, or words of the company, and never suspects that he is either slighted or laughed at unless he is conscious that he deserves it. And if the company should be absurd or ill-bred enough to do either, he does not care twopence, unless the insult be gross and plain. As he is above trifles, he is never vehement and eager about them, and,

wherever they are concerned, rather acquiesces than wrangles.

A vulgar man's conversation always savors strongly of the lowness of his education and company. It turns chiefly upon his domestic affairs, his servants, the excellent order he keeps in his own family, and the little anecdotes of the neighborhood, all of which he relates with emphasis. He is a man gossip.

Vulgarism in language is the next and distinguishing characteristic of bad company and a poor education. A man of real worth avoids nothing with more care. Proverbial expressions and trite sayings are the vulgar man's flowers of rhetoric. His verbal garden is overgrown with weeds. Would he say that men differ in their tastes, he both supports and adorns that opinion by the good old saying, as he respectfully calls it, *what is one man's meat is another man's poison*. If anybody attempts playing *smart* with him, as he calls it, he gives him *tit for tat*. He has always some favorite word for the time being, which, for the sake of using often, he commonly abuses by forcing with combinations, such as *vastly* angry, *vastly* kind, *vastly* handsome, and *vastly* ugly. Even his pronunciation of proper words carries the mark of the beast. He sometimes affects hard words by way of ornament, and always mangles them.

A man of parts never has recourse to proverbs and vulgar aphorisms, uses neither favorite words nor hard words, and takes great care to speak correctly and grammatically but not priggishly, and

to pronounce properly, that is, according to the usage of the best companies; above all, his vocabulary is simple. He avoids foreign words and unusual pronunciations, reserving classical references and quotations for use with his intimates.

An awkward address, ungraceful attitudes and actions, and a certain left-handedness loudly proclaim low education and low company, for it is impossible to suppose that a man can have frequented good company without having caught something, at least, of correct air and motions.

A newly-raised man is distinguished in a regiment by his awkwardness, but he must be impenetrably dull if in a month or two he cannot perform at least the common manual exercises and look like a soldier. The very accoutrements of a man of fashion are grievous encumbrances to a vulgar one. He is at a loss what to do with his hat when it is not upon his head; his cane is at perpetual war with every cup of tea or coffee he drinks—he destroys them first and then accompanies them in their fall. His sword is formidable only to his own legs, which would possibly carry him fast enough out of the way of any sword but his own. His clothes fit him so ill and constrain him so much that he seems rather their prisoner than their proprietor. He presents himself in company like a criminal in a court of justice, his very air condemns him, and people of fashion will no more connect themselves with the one than will people of character with the other.



This repulse drives and sinks him into low company, a gulf from whence no man, after a certain age, ever emerged.

You are traveling now in a country once so famous for arts and arms that it deserves your attention and reflection. View it therefore with care, compare its former state with its present, and examine into the causes of its rise and its decay. Consider it classically and politically, and do not run through it, as too many of your young countrymen do, musically, and, to use a ridiculous word, *knick-knackically*. Let there be no piping or fiddling, I beseech you, and do not become a virtuoso of small wares. Form a taste for painting, sculpture, and architecture, if you please, by a careful examination of the works of the best ancient and modern artists. A real knowledge of them becomes a man of taste, but beyond certain limits the man of taste ends, and the frivolous virtuoso begins.



## XXXIV

London, November 3, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

A friend of ours has justly defined good breeding to be *the result of much good sense, some good nature, and a little self-denial for the sake of others*. It is astonishing to me that anybody of sense can essentially fail in good breeding. As to the modes of it, they vary according to persons, places, and circumstances, and are only to be acquired by observation and experience, but the substance of it is everywhere and eternally the same.

Good manners are to particular societies what good morals are to society in general—their cement and security. And as laws are enacted to enforce good morals, or at least to prevent the ill effects of bad ones, so there are certain rules of civility, universally implied and received, to enforce good manners and to punish bad ones. The ill-bred man who by his manners invades and disturbs the quiet and comfort of private life is by common consent banished from society. Mutual complaisances, attentions, and sacrifices of little conveniences are an implied compact among civilized people. Whoever violates that compact justly forfeits all advantages arising from it.

For my own part I really think that next to the consciousness of doing a good action, that of doing a civil one is the most satisfying, and the appella-

tion which I should covet the most, next to that which belonged to Aristides the Just, would be that of well-bred.

I wish you would turn to the life of Aristides in your copy of *Plutarch's Lives*, which book, by the way, has been the companion of more great men than almost any other. You will there learn why it was that Aristides was called *the just*. Such a title involves fine qualities of brain and heart and soul. It embraces the brain quality of ability—the heart quality of unselfishness—and the soul quality of genuineness, which is honesty. Ability is an essential element, for one must analyze and weigh to be able to sense the proportions; unselfishness is required for a proper estimate of the rights of others, and because most problems of justice directly or indirectly affect the person who is charged with their solution; and genuineness is a habit of honesty, and, as such, indispensable to fairness. All these were attributes of Aristides, as you will perceive from incidents in his career of which you will read. He demonstrated his ability when he readjusted the taxes to the satisfaction of his country; his unselfishness by living and dying poor; and his genuineness by conforming to the maxim, *To be and not to seem*.

## XXXV

London, November 24, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

Every rational being proposes to himself some object more important than mere respiration and obscure animal existence. He desires to distinguish himself among his fellow-creatures. Caesar when embarking in a storm said it was not necessary that he should survive, but it was absolutely necessary that he get to his destination. And Pliny leaves mankind this only alternative: *doing what deserves to be written, or writing what deserves to be read*. You have, I am convinced, one or both of these objects in view, but you must know and use the necessary means, or your pursuit will be vain.

Learning must be adorned; it must have luster as well as weight, or it will be oftener taken for lead than for gold. Learning you have, and will have; I am easy upon that article. However, my business as your friend is not to compliment you upon what you have but to tell you with freedom what you lack; and I must tell you plainly that I fear you lack everything but learning.

I have written you so often of late upon good breeding, address, and the Graces that I shall confine this letter to another subject, nearly akin, in which, I am sure, you are as deficient; I mean, style.

Style is the dress of thoughts, and let them be ever so just, if your style is coarse, homely, or vulgar, they will appear to as much disadvantage and will



be as ill received as your person would be, though ever so well proportioned, if dressed in rags, tatters, and dirt. It is not every understanding that can judge of matter, but every ear can and does judge more or less of style, and were I either to speak to or write for the public, I should prefer moderate matter, adorned with all the beauties and elegancies of style, to the strongest matter in the world, ill-worded or ill-delivered.

Your business is negotiation abroad and oratory in the House of Commons at home. What figure can you make in either case if your style be inelegant—I do not say *bad*? Imagine yourself writing an office-letter to a Secretary of State, to be read by the whole Cabinet Council, and possibly afterwards laid before Parliament; one barbarism, solecism, or vulgarism might circulate through the whole kingdom, to your disgrace and ridicule. For instance, I will suppose you had written the following letter from The Hague to the Secretary of State at London, and leave you to suppose the consequences of it.

MY LORD,

I *had*, last night, the honor of your Lordship's letter of the 24th, and will *set about doing* the orders contained *therein*, and if I get that affair done by the next post, I will not fail to give your Lordship an account of it by *next post*. I have told the French Minister that if that affair be not soon concluded your Lordship would think it *all long of him*, and that he must have neglected to have written his Court



about it. I must beg leave to put your Lordship in mind that I am now full three quarters in arrear; and if I do not very soon receive at least one half year, I shall *cut a very bad figure*, for *this here* place is very dear; and so I *rest*, or *remain*, Your, etc.

You will tell me, possibly, that this is a caricature of an illiberal and inelegant style; I admit it, but I assure you at the same time that a dispatch with less than half of these defects would blow you up forever. It is by no means sufficient to be free from defects in speaking and writing; you must do both correctly and elegantly. No one is pardoned who has any notable defect, because it is his own fault; he need only to attend to, observe, and imitate the best models.

The first qualification of an orator is to speak his own language, particularly, with purity and elegance. A man will be forgiven great errors in a foreign language, but in his own even the least slips are justly laid hold of and ridiculed.

A member of the House of Commons two years ago asserted that we had the finest navy *upon the face of the yearth*. This happy mixture of blunder and vulgarism, you may easily imagine, was a matter of immediate ridicule, but I can assure you that it continues so still and will be remembered as long as the man lives. Another, with like effect, speaking in defense of one upon whom a vote of censure was moved, observed that the gentleman was more *liable* to be thanked and rewarded than cen-

sured. You know, I presume, that *liable* can never be used in a good sense.

You have with you three or four of the best English authors—Dryden, Atterbury, and Swift; read them with the utmost care and with a particular view to their language; they may possibly correct that *curious infelicity of diction* which you acquired at Westminster. Mr. Harte excepted, I will admit that you have met with very few English abroad who could improve your style, and many, I dare say, speak as ill as yourself, and it may be worse; you must therefore take the more pains, and consult your authors the more.

I need not tell you how attentive the Romans and the Greeks, notably the Athenians, were to this object. It is also a study among the Italians and the French; witness their respective academies and dictionaries for improving and fixing their languages. To our shame be it spoken, it is less attended to here than in any polite country, but that is no reason why you should not attend to it; on the contrary, it will distinguish you the more. Cicero says truly that it is glorious to excel other men in that very article in which man excels brutes—*speech*.

Constant experience has shown me that great purity and elegance of style, with graceful elocution, cover a multitude of faults in a speaker. Gain the heart or you gain nothing; the eyes and the ears are the only roads to the heart. Merit and knowledge will not gain hearts though they will secure them when gained. Pray have this truth in your mind. Engage the eyes by your address, air, and

motions; soothe the ears by the elegance and harmony of your diction; the heart will certainly follow; and the whole man, or woman, will as certainly follow the heart.

With all the knowledge which you have at present, or may hereafter acquire, and with all the merit that ever man had, I must repeat to you over and over, if you have not a graceful address, liberal and engaging manners, a prepossessing air, and a degree of eloquence in speaking and writing, you will be nobody, but will have the daily mortification of seeing people with not one-tenth of your merit or knowledge distance you, both in company and in business.

You have read Quintilian, the best book in the world to form an orator; pray read Cicero, *de Oratore*, the best book in the world to finish one. Translate and retranslate, from and to Latin, Greek, and English; make for yourself a pure and elegant English style; it requires nothing but application. I do not find that God has made you a poet, and I am glad that He has not; therefore make yourself an orator, which you can surely do.



## XXXVI

London, November 26, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

While the Roman Republic flourished, while glory was pursued and virtue practiced, and while even little irregularities and indecencies not cognizable by law were thought not to be below the public care, censors were established. They discretionally supplied in particular cases the inevitable defects in the law, for the law can only be general. This employment I arrogate to myself with regard to your own little republic, and I am of opinion that my censorial power will neither be useless to you, nor a sinecure to me. The sooner you make it both, the better for us. I can now exercise this employment only upon hearsay evidence, but when we meet I can form my judgment upon ocular and auricular evidence, and then I shall not let pass the least impropriety, indecorum, or irregularity.

I shall read you with the attention of a critic, not with the partiality of an author, but, different from most critics, I shall seek for faults only to correct them, and not merely to expose them.

I have often thought that there are few things which people in general know less than how to love and how to hate. They hurt those they love by a mistaken indulgence—by a blindness, nay, often a partiality to their faults. Where they hate, they hurt themselves by ill-timed passion and rage. Fortunately for you, I never loved you in such a mis-



taken manner; from your infancy I made you the object of my most serious attention, and not my plaything; I consulted your real good, not your humors or fancies; and I shall continue to do so while you need it, which will probably be the case during our joint lives, for, considering the difference in our ages, in the course of nature you will hardly have acquired experience enough of your own while I am here to lend you any of mine.

People bear being told of their vices or crimes, but not of their little failings and weaknesses. They in some degree justify or excuse the former by the strong passions, seductions, and artifices of others, but to be told of their foibles implies an inferiority of parts too mortifying to that self-love and vanity which are inseparable from our natures. I have been intimate enough with several people to tell them that they had said or done a criminal thing, but I never was intimate enough with any man to tell him seriously that he had said or done a foolish one. Nothing less than the relation between you and me can possibly authorize that freedom, but, fortunately for you, my parental rights, joined to my censorial powers, give it to me to its fullest extent, and my concern for you will cause me to exert it.

Rejoice therefore that there is one person in the world who can and will tell you what will be very useful for you to know, and yet what no other man could or would tell you. Whatever I shall tell you of this kind, you may be sure, can have no other motive than your interest. I can neither be jealous nor envious of your reputation or your fortune, both

of which I must be desirous and even proud to establish and promote; I cannot be your rival, either in love or in business; on the contrary, I want the rays of your rising to reflect new luster upon my setting light. In order to accomplish this I shall analyze you so minutely and censure you so freely that you will not have one single spot upon you when in your meridian.

## XXXVII

London, December 9, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

It is now above forty years since I have made it a rule never to speak or write a word without giving myself at least a moment's time to consider whether it is a good one, and if so, whether I could not find a better in its place. An inharmonious or ragged period shocks my ears, and, like all the rest of the world, I will cheerfully give up some measure of rough sense for a good degree of pleasing sound. I will freely and truly own to you, without either vanity or false modesty, that whatever reputation I have acquired as a speaker is more owing to constant attention to my diction than to my matter, which has been necessarily just the same as other people's.

It is in Parliament that I have set my heart upon your making a figure; it is there that I want to have you justly proud of yourself, and to make me justly proud of you. This means that you must be a good speaker; I use the word *must*, because I know you can if you will.

The vulgar look upon a speaker and a comet with the same astonishment and admiration, taking them both for preternatural phenomena. This error discourages many young men from attempting that character. But let us analyze and simplify the good speaker; let us strip him of those adventitious plumes with which his own pride and the ignorance of



others have decked him, and we shall find the true definition of him to be a man of good common sense who reasons justly and expresses himself elegantly. There is surely no witchcraft in this. A man of sense without a superior and astonishing degree of parts will not talk nonsense on any subject, nor will he, if he has the least taste or application, talk inelegantly.

What, then, does all this mighty art and mystery of speaking in Parliament amount to? Why, no more than this: Every member who addresses the House of Commons speaks to four hundred people that opinion upon a given subject which he would have no difficulty in expressing in any house in England, around the fire or at table, to any fourteen people whatsoever—better judges, perhaps, and severer critics of what he says, than an average fourteen gentlemen of the House of Commons.

I have spoken frequently in Parliament, not always without applause, and therefore I can assure you from my experience that there is very little in it. The elegance of the style and the turn of the periods make the chief impression on the hearers. Give them but one or two round and harmonious periods in a speech, such that they will retain and repeat them, and they will go home as well satisfied as people from an opera, humming all the way one or two favorite tunes that have struck their ears and were easily caught.

Cicero, conscious that he was at the top of his profession, for in his time eloquence was a profession, in order to set himself off, defines an orator to be



such a man as never was and never will be, and by this fallacious argument—that he must know every art and science whatsoever; otherwise, how could he speak upon them? But with submission to so great an authority, my definition of an orator is extremely different from his, and, I believe, much truer. I call that man an orator who reasons justly and expresses himself elegantly upon whatever subject he treats. Problems in geometry, equations in algebra, processes in chemistry, experiments in anatomy, are never the subjects of eloquence, and therefore I humbly conceive that a man may be a very fine speaker and yet know nothing of geometry, algebra, chemistry, or anatomy. The subjects of all Parliamentary debates are those of common sense singly.

## XXXVIII

London, December 12, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

Lord Clarendon says of John Hampden that *he had a head to contrive, a tongue to persuade, and a hand to execute any mischief*. I shall not now enter into the justness of this characterization of Hampden, to whose brave stand against the illegal demand of ship-money we owe our present liberties, but I mention it to you as the character to which I would have you aspire, with the alteration of one single word, *mischief*, which I would change to *worthy action*. The idea is not original, for with this change these very words were used to describe your father by Sir Watkin Williams five years ago in a debate in the House of Commons, at a time, by the way, when I was wind-bound at Harwich on my way back from Holland.

*The head to contrive* God must to a certain degree have given you, but it is in your own power greatly to improve it by study, observation, and reflection.

As for the *hand to execute*, it entirely depends upon yourself. Serious reflection will always give courage in a good cause, and the courage arising from reflection is much superior to the mere animal and constitutional bravery of a foot-soldier. The former is steady and unshaken; the latter is often improperly exerted, and always brutally. The second member of my text, to speak

ecclesiastically, shall be the subject of my following discourse: the *tongue to persuade*; as judicious preachers recommend those virtues which they think scarce in their several audiences; such as truth and continence at Court; disinterestedness in the city; and sobriety in the country.

In the course of your experience you must certainly have felt the effects of elegant and inelegant speaking. Do you not suffer when people accost you in a stammering or hesitating manner; in an untuneful voice, with false accents and cadences; puzzling and blundering through solecisms, barbarisms, and vulgarisms; misplacing even their bad words and inverting all method? Do not these defects prejudice you against their matter, be that what it may; and even against themselves? I am sure they do with me.

On the other hand, do you not feel yourself inclined, prepossessed, nay, even engaged, in favor of those who address you in the directly contrary manner? The persuasion of a correct and adorned style is incredible; it often supplies the want of reason or argument, but when used to support them both it is irresistible.

The French attend greatly to the purity and elegance of their style even in common conversation. I have met with few Italians who do not speak their own language correctly and elegantly. How much more necessary is it for an Englishman to do so who is to speak in a public assembly where the laws and liberties of his country are the subject of deliberation? The tongue that would persuade



there must not content itself with mere articulation.

If you have the least defect in your elocution, take the utmost pains and care to correct it. Do not neglect your style, whatever language you speak in, or whomsoever you speak to. Seek always for the best words and the happiest expressions you can find. Do not content yourself with being barely understood, but adorn your thoughts, and dress them as you would your person, which, however well proportioned, it would be indecent to exhibit naked, or noticeably worse dressed than people of your sort. Customarily avoid all forms of careless speech, for when you speak in public you cannot fully lay aside your everyday habit of language.

I have sent you Lord St. John Bolingbroke's book, published about a year ago. I desire that you read it over and over again, with particular attention to the style, and to all those beauties of expression with which it is adorned. Till I read that book I confess I did not know all the extent and powers of the English language. Lord Bolingbroke has a tongue as well as a pen to persuade; his penetration is almost intuition; his manner of speaking in private conversation is fully as elegant as his writings; upon whatever subject he either speaks or writes, he adorns it with the most splendid eloquence—not studied or labored, but a flowing happiness of diction which has become so habitual to him that even his most familiar conversations, if taken down in writing, would bear the press without the least correction, either as to method or style.

If his conduct in the former part of his life



had been equal to all his natural and acquired talents, he would most justly have merited the appellation, bestowed upon him by his friend and companion Pope, of "all-accomplished St. John." Take him as he is now, the character of all-accomplished is more his due than any man's I ever knew.

## XXXIX

London, December 19, O. S., 1749.

DEAR BOY:

I have often told you that we must not draw general conclusions with regard to mankind from particular principles, though, in the main, true ones.

We must not suppose because a man is a rational animal that he will always act rationally; nor, because he has such or such a dominant passion, that he will act invariably and consequentially in the pursuit of it. No: we are complicated machines, and though we have one main-spring that gives motion to the whole, we have an infinity of little wheels, which in their turn retard, precipitate, and sometimes stop that motion.

Let me exemplify: I will suppose ambition to be, as it commonly is, the dominant passion of a Minister of State, and I will suppose that Minister to be an able one: will he therefore invariably pursue the object of that dominant passion? May I be sure that he will do so and so because he ought to? Sickness or low spirits may dampen his dominant passion; humor and peevishness may triumph over it; inferior passions may at times prevail over it. Is this ambitious statesman affectionate? Indiscreet and unguarded confidences, made in tender moments to his wife or some favorite, may defeat all his schemes. Is he avaricious? Some great appeal to cupidity suddenly presenting itself may unravel all the work of his ambition. Is he passion-

ate? Contradiction or provocation, sometimes artfully contrived, may extort rash and inconsiderate expressions or actions destructive of his main object. Is he vain, and open to flattery? A designing sycophant may mislead him. Even laziness may, at certain moments, make him neglect or omit the one thing necessary to success.

There are two passions which, though inconsistent, frequently accompany each other, like man and wife, and which are commonly clogs each upon the other. I mean ambition and avarice; the latter is often the true cause of the former. It seems to have been so with Cardinal Mazarin, who did everything, submitted to everything, and forgave everything for the sake of plunder. He loved and courted power like a usurer, because it carried profit along with it. Whoever therefore formed his opinion or took his measure singly from the ambitious part of his character often found himself mistaken. Some, who had found this out, made fortunes by letting him cheat them at play. On the contrary, Cardinal Richelieu's prevailing passion seems to have been ambition, and his immense riches only the natural consequence of that ambition gratified.

Richelieu, by the way, is so strong a proof of the inconsistency of human nature that I cannot help observing to you that while he absolutely governed both his king and his country, and was in a great degree the arbiter of the fate of all Europe, he was more jealous of the great reputation of Corneille than of the power of Spain, and more flattered with

being thought (what he was not) the best poet, than being considered (what he certainly was) the greatest statesman in Europe; and affairs stood still while he was preparing his criticism upon *The Cid*. Could one think this possible if he did not know it to be true? Though men are all of one composition, the several ingredients are so differently proportioned in each individual that no two are exactly alike, and no one at all times the same. The ablest man will, upon occasion, be weak; the proudest, mean; the most honest, venal; and the most wicked, good. Study individuals, then, and if you take their outlines from their prevailing passion suspend your last finishing strokes till you have attended to and discovered the operations of their inferior passions, appetites, and humors.

A man's general reputation may be that of the most upright man in the world: do not despise it; you might be thought envious or ill-natured; but, at the same time, do not take this probity upon trust to such a degree as to put your life, fortune, or reputation in his power. This honest man may happen to be your rival in power, in interest, or in love—three passions that often put honesty to most severe trials: but first analyze this honest man yourself, and then judge how far you may trust him.



## XL

DEAR BOY:

Great talents and great virtues will procure you the respect and admiration of mankind, but less talents must win love and affection, which are more satisfying. The former, unassisted and unadorned by the latter, will extort praise, but will at the same time excite fear and jealousy, sentiments absolutely incompatible with love and affection.

Caesar had all the great vices, and Cato all the great virtues. But the small talents, which Cato lacked, Caesar had, and they made him beloved even by his enemies, and gained him the hearts of men in spite of their reason, while Cato was not even beloved by his friends, notwithstanding the esteem and respect they accorded him in recognition of his virtues. I am inclined to believe that if Caesar had lacked those small talents and Cato had possessed them the former would not have assailed with success the liberties of Rome, and the latter would have protected them.

Addison, in his *Cato*, says of Caesar, and I believe with truth: "*Curse on his virtues! they've undone his country.*" By which he means those less but engaging virtues of gentleness, geniality, complaisance, and good humor.

The knowledge of a scholar, the courage of a hero, and the virtue of a stoic will be admired, but if the knowledge be accompanied with arrogance, the courage with ferocity, and the virtue with

inflexible severity, the man will never be loved. The heroism, or, more properly, the brutal bravery of Charles XII, of Sweden, was universally admired, but the man was nowhere beloved, whereas Henry IV, of France, who had full as much bravery and was much longer engaged in wars, was generally beloved on account of his smaller virtues and social graces. We are all so formed that our understandings are generally the dupes of our hearts, that is, of our passions; and the surest way to the former is through the latter, which must be engaged by the small virtues alone, and the manner of exerting them. For example, the insolent civility of a proud man is more shocking than his rudeness could be, because he shows you by his manner that he thinks it mere condescension in him, and that his goodness alone bestows upon you what you have no license to claim. He intimates his protection instead of his friendship, by a gracious nod instead of the usual bow; and signifies his consent that you may sit, walk, eat, or drink with him, rather than invites you to do so.

The costive liberality of a purse-proud man insults the distresses it relieves; he takes care to make you feel your misfortunes, and the difference between your situation and his; he insinuates that both are merited—yours by folly, his by wisdom.

The arrogant pedant does not communicate but promulgates his knowledge: he does not give it to you but inflicts it upon you; and is more desirous to show you your ignorance than his learning.

Such manners as these, not only in the particular instances mentioned but likewise in all others, shock into rebellion the pride and vanity which every man has in his heart, and obliterate in us the obligation for the favor conferred by reminding us of the motive which produced it.

These faults point out their opposite perfections which your own good sense will naturally suggest.

A man is not to be judged by his treatment of his equals, much less his superiors, but by his dealings with those who temporarily or otherwise are in a relative position of dependence, so that they cannot freely resent, for then every act of oppression is the deed of a coward, and, on the other hand, there is a sense of chivalry which uplifts a man when he extends consideration to those less fortunate than himself. The great deformer of character, and indeed of the divine expression of the human face, is arrogance, particularly that which has its foundation in the sands of accidents such as wealth or class. This principle applies with force to the treatment of servants, whom I consider as unfortunate friends, my equals by nature, and my inferiors only by the difference of our positions. If you will cultivate this mental attitude, your servants will never complain of your conduct; your own household, in which you live day by day, will be at peace.



## XLI

London, January 8, O. S., 1750.

DEAR BOY:

I have seldom written to you upon the subject of religion or morality: your own reason, I am persuaded, has given you true notions of both; they speak best for themselves, and I confine myself in this letter to the decency, the utility, and the necessity of scrupulously preserving the appearances of both. When I say *the appearances* of religion I do not mean that you should talk or act like a missionary or an enthusiast, nor that you should take up a controversial cudgel against whoever attacks your sect: this would be useless, and unbecoming your age; but I mean that you should not seem to approve, encourage, or applaud those notions which strike at religions equally, and which are the poor, threadbare topics of half-wits and minute philosophers. Even those who are silly enough to laugh at such jokes are yet wise enough to distrust the characters of the jokers, for, putting moral virtues at the highest and religion at the lowest, religion must still be allowed to be a collateral security, at least, to virtue, and every prudent man will sooner trust to two securities than to one.

Whenever therefore you happen to be in company with those who laugh at religion to show their wit, or disclaim it to complete their riot, let no word or look of yours intimate the least approbation. Depend upon this truth: every man is the



worse looked upon and the less trusted for being thought to have no religion, in spite of all the pompous and specious epithets he may assume, and a wise atheist, if such a thing there is, would, for his own interest and reputation in this world, pretend to some religion.

For my own part, I have religion enough to submit to my fate here on earth without melancholy and without a murmur, for though I can by no means account for either the moral or the physical evil in the world, yet, conscious of the narrow bands of human understanding, and convinced of the wisdom and justice of the Supreme and Intelligent Being who gave my soul to me, and who placed evil here, I am persuaded it is fit and right that evil should be here.

One cannot contemplate his own existence without thinking of the Eternal Author of it, and cannot consider His attributes without some fear, though to my mind still more hope. It is true that we can have no adequate conception of a Being so infinitely superior to us, but according to the best notions which we are capable of forming concerning His justice and mercy, the latter seems necessarily to preponderate. But, on the other hand, I have little liking for dogma; I regard with jealousy any temporal advantage or power which any church seeks for herself or her devotees; and I exert my influence to rid religion of intolerance and priestcraft.

Your moral character must not only be pure, but, like Caesar's wife, above suspicion. The least

blemish upon it is fatal. There are, however, wretches in the world profligate enough to explode all notions of moral good and evil, to maintain that they are merely local and depend entirely upon the customs and fashions of different countries: nay, there are still, if possible, more unaccountable wretches; I mean those who affect to preach and propagate such absurd and infamous notions without believing them themselves. These are the devil's hypocrites. Avoid, as much as possible, the company of such people, who reflect a degree of discredit and infamy upon all who converse with them. But as you may sometimes, by accident, fall into such company, take great care that no complaisance, no good-humor, no warmth of festal mirth shall ever cause you even to seem to acquiesce in such doctrines, much less to approve or applaud them.

On the other hand, do not debate nor enter into serious argument upon the subject, but content yourself with telling these *apostles* that you know they are not serious, that you have a better opinion of them than they wish, and that you are sure they would not practice the doctrine they preach. But put your private mark upon them and shun them.

There is nothing so delicate as your moral character, and nothing which it is to your interest so much to preserve pure. Should you be suspected of injustice, malignity, perfidy, lying, all the parts and knowledge in the world will never procure you esteem, friendship, or respect. A strange concurrence of circumstances has sometimes raised bad men

to high stations, but they have been raised like criminals to a pillory, where their persons and their crimes, by being conspicuous, are only the more known and the more detested.

I would not advise you to a pharisaical pomp of virtue. But I will recommend to you a scrupulous tenderness for your moral character, and the utmost care not to say or do the least thing that may ever so slightly taint it. Show yourself upon all occasions the advocate and friend of virtue but not its bully.

Colonel Charteris was, I believe, the most notorious rascal in the world. By all sorts of crimes he accumulated immense wealth. When he came to die, his neighbors, more intense than fastidious, threw offal and dead dogs into the grave with him to indicate the rare esteem in which they had held him during life. This is the man whom my friend and physician the talented Dr. Arbuthnot has immortalized by a celebrated epitaph in which he sets out the evil character of the man, but generously substitutes the name of Don Francisco.

Charteris was so sensible to the disadvantage of a bad reputation that I once heard him say, in his impudent, profligate manner, that he would not give one farthing for virtue, but he would give ten thousand pounds for a good reputation, because he would get a hundred thousand pounds by it, whereas he was so blasted that he had no longer any opportunity to cheat people. Is it possible,



then, that an honest man can undervalue such an advantage when a wise rogue would purchase it so dearly?

There is one vice into which people of good education, and in the main of good principles, sometimes fall, from mistaken notions of skill, dexterity, and self-defense; I mean lying, though it is inseparably attended with more infamy and loss than any other. The prudence and necessity of sometimes concealing the truth insensibly seduce people to violate it. It is the only art of mean capacities, and the only refuge of mean spirits.

Concealing the truth upon necessary occasions is prudent and innocent, but telling a lie is infamous and foolish. I will state you a case in your own department. Suppose you are employed at a foreign Court, and the Minister is absurd or impertinent enough to ask you what your instructions are. Will you tell him a lie, which, aside from moral considerations, as soon as found out, and found out it certainly will be, must destroy your credit, crush your reputation, and render you useless there? No. Will you tell him the truth, then, and betray your trust? As certainly, *no*. But you will answer with firmness that you are surprised at such a question, that you are persuaded that he does not expect an answer to it, but that, at all events, he certainly will not have one.

Lord Bacon observes that they are the weaker sort of politicians who have recourse to lying. Here are his words:



Certainly the ablest men that ever were have had all an openness and frankness of dealing, and a name of certainty and veracity; but then they were like horses well managed, for they could tell passing well when to stop or turn, and at such times when they thought the case indeed required dissimulation, if then they used it, it came to pass that the former opinion, spread abroad, of their good faith and clearness of dealing, made them almost invisible.

The word *invisible* puzzled me for a time. At first I regarded it as a printer's error for *invincible*. Then I thought it some sly reference, for Bacon has been thought to use hidden writing, and one meaning of the word is a *Rosicrucian*, a name adopted in recognition of the invisible, secret, and elusive nature of the order of that name, with which Bacon was suspected to have a more than formal connection. But it became clear to me, upon reflection, that the word means *impenetrable*, and in our day so clear a writer as Bacon surely would have used some such word.

There is a great difference between that purity of character, which I so earnestly recommend to you, and stoical gravity and austerity, which I do not. At your age I would no more wish you to be a Cato than a Clodius. Be, and be reckoned, a man of pleasure, as well as a man of business. Enjoy this happy and giddy time of your life; shine in the pleasures and in the company of people of your own age. This is all to be done, and indeed only can

be done, without the least taint upon the purity of your moral character. If you do not possess this purity you can have no dignity of character, without which it is impossible to rise in the world. Do not confuse dignity of character with dignity of manner, defined by a Frenchman to be "a mysterious something in address assumed to hide deficiencies in intellect." You must be respectable as well as reputable, if you will be respected. I have known people to slattern away their character without really polluting it; the consequence of which has been that they have become innocently contemptible; their merit has been dimmed, their pretensions have been unregarded, and all their views have been defeated. Character must be kept bright as well as clean. Content yourself with mediocrity in nothing. In purity of character and in politeness of manner labor to excel all, if you wish to equal many.

## XLII

London, January 18, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I consider the solid part of your little edifice as so nearly completed that my only remaining concern is about the embellishments, and they must now be your principal care. Adorn yourself with all those graces and accomplishments which, without solidity, are frivolous: take one man with a very moderate degree of knowledge but with a pleasing figure, a prepossessing address, graceful in all that he says and does, polite, and, in short, adorned with all the less talents; and take another man with sound sense and profound learning but without these advantages; the former will not only get the better of the latter in every pursuit of every *kind*, but in truth there will be no sort of competition between them.

Can every man acquire these advantages? I say, Yes, if he pleases, assuming that his situation and circumstances enable him to frequent good company. Attention, observation, imitation will most infallibly do it.

When you see a man who at first blush prepossesses you in his favor, and makes you entertain a good opinion of him, and yet do not know why, analyze his charm and the several parts that compose it and you will generally find it to be the result of a happy assembling of modesty unembarrassed, respect without timidity, a gentle but unaffected attitude of body and limbs, an open, cheerful, but un-



smirking countenance, and a dress by no means negligent and yet not foppish—in short, the man has achieved the golden mean in these respects. Copy him, then, not servilely, but as some of the greatest masters of painting have copied others, in-somuch that their copies have been equal to the originals both as to beauty and freedom.

When you see a man who is universally allowed to shine as an agreeable, well-bred man, and a fine gentleman, attend to him, watch him carefully, observe in what manner he addresses himself to his superiors, how he lives with his equals, and, above all, how he treats his inferiors, for this last is the real test of true manhood. Mind his turn of conversation in the several situations of morning visits, the table, and evening amusements. Imitate without mimicking him, and with due care of your own individuality; be his duplicate but not his ape. You will find that he takes care never to say or do anything that can be construed into a slight, or that can in any degree mortify people's vanity or self-love; on the contrary, you will perceive that he makes people pleased with him by first making them pleased with themselves; he shows respect, regard, esteem, and attention, where they are severally proper; he sows them with care, and he reaps them in plenty.

These amiable accomplishments are all to be acquired by use and imitation. The great point is to choose good models, and to study them with care. People insensibly contract, not only the air, the manners, and the vices of those with whom they



commonly converse, but their virtues, too, and even their way of thinking.

This is so true that I have known persons of very plain understandings to catch a certain degree of wit by constant contact with men of parts. Persist therefore in keeping the best companions, and you will insensibly become like them, but if you add attention and observation you will very soon be one of them. This inevitable contagion of company shows you the necessity of keeping the best, for in every companionship something will stick.

I here subjoin a list of all those necessary ornamental accomplishments without which no man living can either please or rise in the world, and which only require care and attention to possess:

To speak elegantly whatever language you speak in, without which nobody will hear you with pleasure.

An agreeable and distinct elocution, without which no one will hear you with patience; this everybody may acquire who is not born with some imperfection in the organs of speech.

A distinguished politeness of manners and address, which common sense, observation, and good company will infallibly give you.

A gentle carriage and graceful motions, with the air of a man of fashion. A good dancing-master, with some care on your part, and some imitation of those who excel, will soon bring this about.

To be extremely clean in your person, and

dressed according to the fashion. Negligence in dress while you were a schoolboy was pardonable, but it is not so now.

## XLIII

London, January 25, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

It is so long since I have heard from you that I suppose Rome has engrossed every moment of your time, and if it has in the manner I wish, I willingly give up my share of it. Your studies, the respectable remains of antiquity, and your evening amusements cannot leave you much time to write. You will probably never see Rome again, and therefore you ought to see it well now: by seeing it well, I do not mean merely the buildings, statues, and paintings, though they undoubtedly deserve your attention, but I mean seeing into the constitution and the government.

How go your pleasures at Rome? Are you in fashion there? That is, do you live with the people who are so? That is the only way of becoming so yourself. Has any woman of fashion and good breeding taken the trouble to abuse and laugh at you amiably to your face? I do not presume to ask if you have any attachment, because I believe you will not make me your confidant, but let me observe for your benefit that women are not so much taken by good looks as men are, but prefer almost always those men who show them the most attention.

Let us now make a little excursion into poetry, to learn how this idea may be expressed in softer words.



Would you engage the lovely fair?  
With gentlest manners treat her;  
With tender looks and graceful air,  
In softest accents greet her.

Verse were but vain, the Muses fail,  
Without the Graces' aid;  
The God of Verse could not prevail  
To stop the flying maid.

Attention by attentions gain  
And merit care by cares;  
So shall the nymph reward your pain,  
And Venus crown your prayers.

I confess that this rhyme is my own, and I urge you to similar effort; writing in poetic form is of great service; "it increases the vocabulary and facilitates the expression," as a great man put it when he was twitted for the verses written in his youth.

Good-bye, my dear friend!

## XLIV

London, February 5, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Few are good economists of their fortune, and still fewer of their time; and yet time is the more precious. I heartily wish you to be a good economist of both, and you are now of an age to begin to think seriously of these two important articles.

Young people are likely to think they have so much time before them that they may squander what they please of it, and will yet have enough left, just as great fortunes have frequently seduced people to a ruinous profusion.

Old Mr. Lowndes, the famous Secretary of the Treasury, used to say, "*Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.*" To this maxim, which he not only preached but practiced, his two grandsons at this time owe the very considerable fortunes that he left them.

This holds equally true as to time, and I earnestly recommend to you the care of those minutes and quarter hours in the course of the day which people think too short to deserve attention, and yet, if summed up at the end of the year, amount to a great portion of time.

For example, you are to be at such a place at twelve; you go out at eleven to make two or three visits first, upon persons who, it happens, are not at home; instead of sauntering away that intermediate time, return home, write a letter, or take up a

book—I do not mean Descartes, Locke, or Newton, by way of dipping, but some book of rational amusement, some detached piece. This will be so much time saved.

Many lose a great deal of time by reading frivolous stuff that nourishes the mind just as much as whipped cream would the body. Stick to the best-established books in every language; the celebrated poets, historians, orators, and philosophers. In this way, to use a city metaphor, you will make fifty per cent of that time of which others make not above three or four, or probably nothing at all.

Many lose time by laziness; they loll and yawn in a great chair, tell themselves that they have not time to begin anything, and that it will do as well another day. This is a most unfortunate disposition, and the greatest obstruction to both learning and business. At your age you have no right nor claim to laziness; you are but just listed in the world, and must be active, diligent, indefatigable. If ever you propose commanding with dignity, you must serve up to it with diligence.

Dispatch is the soul of business, and nothing contributes more to dispatch than method and order. You cannot conceive how much time you will save by it, nor how much more easily and how much better everything will be done.

The Duke of Marlborough slatterned himself into that immense debt which is not yet paid off.

The hurry and confusion of the Duke of Newcastle do not proceed from much business, but from lack of method. Sir Robert Walpole, who had



ten times as much business to attend to, was never in a hurry because he did it with method.

Method is the great advantage that lawyers have over others in speaking in Parliament; the necessity of observing it in their pleadings in court renders it habitual to them.

Lay down a method for everything and stick to it inviolably, as far as unexpected incidents allow. Reply to every letter, for no slight is more generally resented than an unanswered letter. As far as practicable answer a letter on the day of its receipt, whereby you gain great favor, but hold all important replies until the next day. A night's sleep is a great leveler of the judgment.

Adopt a method for your reading, for which allot a certain share of your mornings; let it be in a consistent and consecutive course, and not in that desultory and unmethodical manner in which many read scraps of different authors upon different subjects. Keep a short commonplace book for passages that strike your fancy or which may be useful to quote. Read history with maps and a chronological book, or tables, lying by you, and constantly refer to them, without which history is only a confused heap of facts.

In this connection remember the words of the great Bacon:

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously;

and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. . . . . Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man. . . . . Histories make men wise; poets, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend.

One method more I recommend to you, which I have found of great benefit; that is, to rise early and at the same hour every morning, how late soever you may have sat up the night before. This secures you an hour or two, at least, of reading or reflection before the common interruptions of the morning begin, and it will save your constitution by forcing you to go to bed early at least one night in three.

You may say, it may be, as many young people would, that all this order and method is very troublesome, only fit for dull people, and a disagreeable restraint upon the noble spirit and fire of youth. I deny it, and assert, on the contrary, that it will procure you both more time and more taste for your pleasures; so far from being troublesome to you, after you have pursued it a month it would be troublesome to you to lay it aside. Business whets the appetite, and gives a taste to pleasures, as exercise does to food; and business can never be done without method; it raises the spirits for pleasure; and a *spectacle*, a ball, an assembly, will much more sensibly affect a man who has employed the preceding part of the day than one who has

lost it: nay, I will venture to say that a lady of quality will seem to have more charms to a man of study or business than to a saunterer, with whom the same listlessness runs through his whole conduct; he is insipid in his pleasures as he is inefficient in everything else.

There is a certain dignity to be kept up in pleasures as well as in business. In love, a man may lose his heart with dignity. At table, a man with decency may have a distinguishing palate, but indiscriminate voraciousness degrades him to a glutton.

Vivacity and wit make a man shine in company but trite jokes and loud laughter reduce him to a buffoon. Every virtue, they say, has its kindred vice; every pleasure, I am sure, has its neighboring disgrace. Mark carefully therefore the line that separates them; rather stop a yard short than step an inch beyond, and never lose sight of the distinction between pleasure and happiness, of which I have had a word to say before.



## XLV

London, April 26, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

As your sojourn in Paris will, in one way or another, be of great consequence to you, my letters will henceforward be principally calculated for that meridian.

You will be left there to your own discretion. You will find in the Academy a number of young fellows much less discreet than yourself. They will be your acquaintances, but inquire into their characters before you form any connections among them. Do not allow their ignorance and idleness to break in upon those morning hours which you allot to your studies. Do not breakfast with them, which consumes a great deal of time, but tell them, not magisterially and sententiously, that you must read two or three hours in the morning, and that for the rest of the day you are very much at their service, though, by the way, I hope that you will keep wiser company in the evenings.

Remember to receive coldly all civil gentlemen who take a fancy to you at first sight, and take care to be previously engaged, whatever excursion they propose to you. A young fellow who seems to have no will of his own and who does everything that is asked of him is called good-natured but at the same time is thought silly. Act wisely, upon solid principles, and from true motives, but keep them to yourself, and never talk dogmatically. When you

are invited to drink, excuse yourself by saying that you wish you could but it is impracticable, since so little makes you both drunk and sick.

And now, my dear son, let me make some general observations on small vices or indulgences. Some of these do no harm if not over-indulged, but their influence is insidious. Luxury is so comfortable and so well-mated with laziness of mind and body that it makes itself at home, and establishes itself as a member of the family in the most ingratiating manner, and by imperceptible degrees.

So it is that all our indulgences must be watched. If you touch liquor, have a care to adopt rules and limitations *in advance*—you cannot be sure of the strength to do it later. All men of worth who indulge this appetite at all do so under rules, such as not to drink until after the business of the day is over, not to patronize a public bar, and not to drink more than one glass at a sitting. Such rules *may* keep you from becoming a drunkard, but no man, old or young, is safe even with them, so dangerous is the habit. I am now referring to liquor in particular because it is the most progressive and destructive of our indulgences, and if the habit should become fastened upon you, all the others will certainly cling with it.

For the young, smoking is more harmful than drinking, as far as the physical being is concerned, and for the old, overeating more dangerous than either. But if you acquire the liquor habit, you will, as I say, have the others also. I am continually trying to point the way whereby you can make

the most of yourself. You will be constantly in competition with others, and if by indulgence you are weakened in body or will, you are destined to lose in the contest, provided only your competitor be not also weak, and upon that you cannot rely.

Remember that to command others you must have command of your own appetites, and that character is built upon restraints. Be sure therefore that you are bigger than your habits. I commend to you our friend Sherman, who, determined to be sure that tobacco is not master, shuts off smoking for a month in every year, though I confess he always chooses the month of February.

Dedicate, I beg of you, the whole year to your own advantage and final improvement, and do not be diverted from those objects by idle dissipations or bad example. After this year, do whatever you please: I will interfere no longer in your conduct, for I am sure that both you and I shall then be safe.



## XLVI

London, April 30, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

While in France connect yourself exclusively with the French; improve yourself with the old, divert yourself with the young; conform cheerfully to French customs, even to the little follies, but not to the vices. Do not, however, preach or remonstrate, for remonstrances do not suit your age.

In French companies you will not customarily find much learning; therefore take care not to brandish yours in their faces. People hate those who make them feel their inferiority. Conceal all your learning carefully, or, at most, let it be extorted from you. If a man of learning affects to show it, the fact is questioned, and he is reckoned only superficial, but if afterwards it appears that he really has it, he is pronounced a pedant. Real merit of any kind will be discovered, and nothing can depreciate it but its exhibition. Merit may not always be fully rewarded, but it will always be known.

You will in general find the women of the *beau monde* in Paris better informed than the men, who are bred up singly for the army, but that sort of education which makes them ignorant of books gives them a great knowledge of the world, an easy address, and polite manners.

Fashion is more tyrannical in Paris than in any other place in the world; it governs even more absolutely than the king, which is saying a great

deal. The least revolt against it is punished by proscription. You must observe and conform if you will be in fashion yourself, and there, if you are not in fashion, you are nobody.

## XLVII

London, June 5, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

How many people one meets everywhere who with moderate parts and little knowledge push themselves far by being sanguine, enterprising, and persevering! They will take no denial from man or woman; difficulties do not discourage them; repulsed twice or thrice, they rally, they charge again, and nine times in ten prevail at last. The same means will much sooner and more certainly attain the same ends with your parts and knowledge. You have a fund to be sanguine upon, and good forces to rally. In business, talent supposed, nothing is more effectual or successful than a just though concealed confidence in yourself, a firm resolution, and an unwearying perseverance.

None but madmen attempt real impossibilities, and whatever is possible is in one way or another to be brought about. If one method fails, try another, and suit your methods to the characters with whom you have to do.

At the treaty of the Pyrenees, which Cardinal Mazarin and Don Louis de Haro concluded, the latter carried some very important points by his constant and cool perseverance. The Cardinal had all the Italian vivacity and impatience; Don Louis all the Spanish phlegm and tenaciousness. The point which the Cardinal had most at heart was to hinder the re-establishment of the Prince of



Condé, his implacable enemy, but he was impatient to return to Court, where absence is always dangerous. Don Louis observed this, and never failed at every conference to bring the affair of the Prince of Condé upon the carpet. The Cardinal refused for some time even to treat upon it; Don Louis as constantly persisted, till at last he prevailed, contrary to the intentions and the interest both of the Cardinal and his Court. Sense must distinguish between what is impossible and what is merely difficult, and spirit and perseverance will get the better of the latter, but it is interesting to observe how few things are really impossible—so few as to give occasion to the saying, *Nothing is impossible*.

I must not omit one thing which is previously necessary to this, and indeed to everything else, that is, attention, a flexibility of attention, never to be wholly engrossed by any past or future object, but instantly directed to the present one, be it what it may. An absent man can make but few observations, and those will be disjointed and imperfect ones, as half the circumstances must necessarily escape him. He can pursue nothing steadily because his absences cause him to lose his way. Absences are disagreeable, and hardly to be tolerated in old age, but in youth cannot be forgiven. If you find that you have the least tendency to them, pray watch yourself carefully; you may prevent them now, but if you let them grow into a habit you will find it very difficult to cure them hereafter, and a worse distemper I do not know.

## XLVIII

London, July 9, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

It has long been a matter of minor interest with me that the use of the salutation *my friend* technically conveys a meaning, not the opposite, but the reverse of that intended. While you are indeed my friend, when I so address you I am inspired by the thought that I am *your* friend—not you, *mine*; and so it is in fact received throughout the world, where a real friend is comparatively rare.

I should not deserve the appellation of friend in return from you if I did not freely and explicitly inform you of the corrigible defects which I may discover in you. Those who in the common course of the world may call themselves your friends, or those whom according to the accepted notions of friendship you may possibly regard as such, will never tell you of your faults, still less of your weaknesses, nor should they do so, for human nature is so frail that even the best friendships will not stand personal criticisms.

I am credibly informed that there is still a hitch or hobble in your enunciation, and that when you speak fast you sometimes speak unintelligibly. I have frequently laid before you my thoughts on this subject so fully that I can say nothing new upon it. I must therefore only repeat that your whole career is in danger. Your trade is to speak well, both in public and private. The manner of your speaking

is fully as important as the matter, for more people have ears to be tickled than understandings to judge. Be your productions ever so good, they will be of no use if you stifle and strangle them in birth.

The best compositions of Corelli, if ill executed and played out of tune, instead of touching, as they do when well performed, would only excite the indignation of the hearers. Remember of what importance Demosthenes, and one of the Gracchi, thought *enunciation*; read what stress Cicero and Quintilian lay upon it; even the herb-women of Athens were correct judges of it.

Oratory with all its graces, that of enunciation in particular, is fully as necessary in our government as it ever was in Greece or Rome. No man can make a figure in this country without speaking, and speaking well, in public. If you would persuade, you must first please; and if you would please you must tune your voice to harmony; you must articulate every syllable distinctly; your emphasis and cadences must be strongly and properly marked; and the whole together must be graceful and engaging; if you do not speak in that manner you would much better not speak at all. All the learning you have, or ever can have, is not worth one groat without it. It may be a comfort and an amusement to you in your closet but can be of no use to you in the world.

Let me conjure you therefore to make this your only object till you have absolutely conquered it, for that is in your power; think of nothing else, read and speak for nothing else. Read aloud, though alone,

•



and read articulately and distinctly, as if you were reading in public, and on the most important occasion. Recite pieces of eloquence, declaim scenes of tragedies as if you had a large audience. By this method others have succeeded notably.

If there is any particular consonant which you have difficulty in articulating, as I think you had with *r*, utter it a million times, till you enunciate it correctly. Never speak quickly till you have first learned to speak well. In short, lay aside every book and every thought that does not directly tend to this great object, absolutely decisive of your future.

The next thing necessary to your destination is writing correctly, elegantly, and in a good hand. Your hand-writing is a bad one and would make a scurvy figure in an office-book of letters, or even in a lady's pocket-book. But that fault is easily cured by every man who has the use of his eyes and of his right hand. Indeed a study of your hand-writing will show you that a few changes only will make a great difference—two or three letters poorly formed may be watched and corrected until the new form becomes a habit; then two or three more, and most of the defect is cured. You will be surprised at the easiness of this undertaking, once you apply yourself to it.

## XLIX

London, November 8, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Before you get to Paris it is necessary that we should understand each other thoroughly, which is the most effective way of preventing disputes. Money, the root of much mischief in the world, is the cause of most quarrels between fathers and sons, the former commonly thinking that they cannot give too little, and the latter that they cannot have enough, both being equally in the wrong.

You must do me the justice to acknowledge that I have not hitherto grudged any expense that could be of use or real pleasure to you, and I can assure you, by the way, that you have traveled at a much greater expense than I have myself, but I never so much as thought of that while Mr. Harte was at the head of your finances, being sure that the sums granted were scrupulously applied to the uses for which they were intended. But the case will soon be altered, and you will be your own receiver and treasurer. I promise you, however, that we will not quarrel upon the amount, which shall be cheerfully and freely granted: the application and appropriation of it will be the material point, which I am now going to clear up and finally settle with you.

I will fix no settled allowance, though I well know in my own mind what would be proper, but I will first try your drafts, by which I can in a good degree judge of your conduct. This only I tell you

in general, that if the channels through which the money is to go are the proper ones the source shall not be scant, but should it deviate into dirty, muddy, or obscure ones, which it cannot do for a week without my knowing it, I give you fair and timely notice that the source will instantly be dry.

I would have you well dressed, by which I mean dressed as the generality of people of fashion are, that is to say, not to be taken notice of, for being either better or worse dressed than other people; it is by being well dressed, not finely dressed, that a gentleman should be distinguished.

The article of pocket money is inconsiderable in Paris compared with what it is in London—the silly custom of giving money wherever one dines or sups and the expensive importunity of subscriptions not being introduced there.

All the decent expenses of a gentleman I will most readily defray. I come now to those which I will neither bear nor supply. The first of these is gaming. Though I have not the least reason to suspect you of it, I think it necessary to assure you that no consideration in the world shall ever make me pay your play-debts: should you ever urge to me that your honor is pawned I should immovably assure you that it was your honor, not mine, and that your creditor might even take the pawn for the debt.

Low company and low pleasures are always more costly than liberal and elegant ones. The disgraceful riots of a tavern are much more expensive, as well as dishonorable, than excesses in good company.



I must absolutely hear of no tavern scrapes and squabbles.

By what goes before, you will easily perceive that I mean to allow you whatever is necessary not only for the figure but for the pleasures of a gentleman, and not to supply the profusion of a rake. This, you must confess, does not savor of either the severity or parsimony of old age. I consider this agreement between us as a subsidiary treaty on my part for services to be performed on yours. I promise you that I will be as punctual in the payment of the subsidies as England has been during the last war, but then I give you notice at the same time that I require a much more scrupulous execution of the treaty on your part than we met with on that of our Allies, or the payment will be stopped.

I hope all that I have now said is absolutely unnecessary, and that sentiments more worthy and more noble than pecuniary ones would of themselves have pointed out to you the conduct I recommend, but at all events I resolved to be once for all explicit with you, that in the worst that can happen you may not plead ignorance, and complain that I had not sufficiently advised you of my intentions.

Having mentioned the word *rake*, I must say a word or two upon that subject, because young people too frequently, and always fatally, mistake the character for that of a man of pleasure, whereas there are not in the world two characters more different. A rake combines all the lowest, most ignoble, degrading, and shameful vices; they all conspire to wreck his character and ruin his fortune, while

wine and disease contend which shall the sooner and the more effectually destroy his constitution. A dissolute footman or porter makes full as good a rake as a man of the first quality.

A man of pleasure, though not always as scrupulous as he should be, and as one day he will wish he had been, at least refines his pleasures by taste, accompanies them with decency, and enjoys them with dignity. Few can be men of pleasure—every man may be a rake.

Remember that I shall know everything you say or do in Paris, exactly as if, by the force of magic, I could follow you everywhere, like a sylph or a gnome, invisible myself. Seneca says, very prettily, that one should ask nothing of God but that which he would be willing men should know; nor of men, but that which he would be willing God should know. I advise you to say or do nothing in Paris but what you would be willing that I should know. I hope, nay, I believe, that such will be the case.

Sense, I dare say, you do not lack; instruction, I am sure, you have never been denied; experience you are daily gaining; all of which together must inevitably make you both respectable and reputable.

## L

London, November 12, O. S., 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

You will probably think that this letter turns upon trifles but I assure you to the contrary.

I shall not dwell now on personal graces, a liberal air, and an engaging address, which I have so often recommended to you, but shall descend still lower—to your dress, cleanliness, and the care of your person.

Dress neatly and so as not to attract attention in any way, which, in passing, cannot be done at all unless your shoes are kept immaculate.

In your person and in your linen you must be accurately clean; your teeth, hands, and nails should be superlatively so; a dirty mouth infallibly causes decay to the teeth and intolerable pain, besides being offensive. Nothing looks more ordinary, vulgar, and illiberal than dirty hands, and ugly, uneven and ragged nails. I do not suspect you of that shocking, awkward trick of biting your nails, but that is not enough; you must keep the ends of them smooth and clean; they should be small segments of circles, which by a very little care in cutting they are easily brought to; every time you wipe your hands, clean the nails, which can be done readily when they are moist, and rub the skin around the nails backwards that it may not grow up and shorten them too much.



My mentioning these particulars arises from some suspicion that such hints are not unnecessary, for when you were a schoolboy you were slovenly and dirty above your fellows.

I must add another caution, which is, upon no account whatever put your fingers, as too many people do, in your nose or ears. It is one of the most shocking, nasty, vulgar acts of rudeness that can be offered to company; it disgusts one; it turns one's stomach. Wash your ears well every morning, and blow your nose in your handkerchief whenever you have occasion, but, by the way, without vulgar trumpeting, and never at the table, for this is sickening to sensitive people, as I have told you before.

If you smoke at all, avoid smoking at table until all have dined, for it is unpardonable selfishness to set up a stench and interfere with the relish of others when a few moments' delay will avoid it. Remember that those who do not indulge in small vices are entitled to enjoy life according to their wishes; while you have the unction of producing fresh smoke, they must take theirs second-hand; and if you are in a room, or in a home, still others, perhaps, must at the time or later take theirs stale and foul. They do not disturb you by refraining; have a care, then, that you do not render them uncomfortable by your indulgence. I have seen a man enjoying a cigar in public while a dozen others, men and women, were showered with ashes and regaled with profane incense. It is obviously just to avoid smoking in *public* places, particularly when women are present.

While I am speaking incidentally of the table, let me suggest that you never hold a bone in your hand and gnaw at it. Notice the effect upon your eye of your neighbor opposite with a half-cleaned bone in front of his face, and you will not again be guilty of this solecism. In passing, let me admonish you when you are dining to keep your elbows close to your sides, or you will not cut a graceful figure. And again, avoid topics for table-talk which jar upon any of the senses.

## LI

## THE ORIGINAL IN FRENCH

*Translation by Grace Belden.*

London, December 24, 1750.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

So you are at last a Parisian, and one must address a Parisian in French. You will be good enough to reply to me in the same tongue, that I may learn to what degree you possess the elegance, the delicacy, and the orthography of that language, which has become, so to speak, the universal language of Europe. They assure me that you speak it very well, but this is comparative. That which will pass for correct speech outside of Paris would there be considered out of date. In that country even the language has its fashion, and one which changes almost as often as the style of a coat.

*The affected, the over-nice, the neologic,* are too much the fashion there to-day. Learn, observe, and even imitate, but do not let your taste be infected. Wit, also, has its fashion, and at this very time, in Paris it is the fashion to have some of it, even in spite of Minerva; everybody runs after wit, which, by the way, never lets itself be caught; if it does not come of itself, one runs after it in vain. But unfortunately for those who pursue it, they catch something they merely take for wit, and which they put



forth as such. Theirs is at best the lot of Ixion; it is a cloud which they embrace instead of the goddess whom they are pursuing.

For a century and a half taste in France, like that country itself, has had many ups and downs. Good taste only began to make its way under the reign of, I do not say, Louis XIII, but of Cardinal Richelieu, and was refined under that of Louis XIV, a great king at least, if he was not a great man. Corneille was the restorer of true taste, as well as the founder of the French theater.

Do not let yourself be imposed on by fashion, nor by the cliques with which you may associate, but try all these different kinds before receiving them in exchange for the coin of good sense and reason, and be persuaded that *nothing is beautiful but the true*.

All this need not prevent you from outwardly conforming to the fashion and tone of the different companies. Talk epigrams with the dandies, false sentiments with the chatterers, and nonsense with the professional fine wits. At your age it is not for you to give tone to the company, but on the contrary to receive it.

Examine well, however, and weigh all; distinguish carefully the false from the true, and do not mistake the glitter of Tasso for the gold of Virgil.

You will find in Paris sound authors and companies. You will never hear *trifling, affectation, or forced style* at Madame de Monconseil's, nor in the homes where she will introduce you. President Montesquieu will not talk with you in epigrams;

his great book, *The Spirit of the Laws*, upon which he labored for twenty years, is written in simple language; it will please and instruct you.

As I leave you on your honor in Paris, I flatter myself that you will not abuse my confidence. I do not ask you to be a capuchin friar; on the contrary I recommend pleasures, but I demand that they be the pleasures of a gentleman, which add brilliancy to the character of a young man; but debauchery disgraces and degrades.

Associate as much as you can with the foreign Ministers, which is equivalent to traveling through different countries. Speak Italian to all the Italians, and German to all the Germans whom you meet, in order to keep familiar with these languages.

I wish you, my dear friend, as many Happy New Years as you deserve, and not one more. But may you deserve a great many!

## LII

London, January 28, O. S., 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

A draft for ninety pounds sterling was brought me the other day, said to be drawn upon me by you; I scrupled paying it at first, not on account of the sum but because you had sent me no letter of advice, which is always done in such transactions, and still more because I did not perceive that you had signed it. The person who presented it desired me to look carefully, saying that I would discover your name at the bottom. With the help of my magnifying glass I was able to perceive that what I had first taken only for somebody's mark was, in truth, your name, written in the worst and smallest hand I ever saw in my life. Gentlemen and men of business write their names always in the same way, that their signatures may be known, and they generally sign in a larger character than their common hand, whereas your name was signed in a smaller and a worse hand than your customary writing.

I have often told you that every man can write whatever hand he pleases, and it is plain that you can, since you write both Greek and German characters, which you never learned from a writing-master, extremely well, though your common hand, which you learned of a master, is an exceedingly bad and illiberal one, equally unfit for business and common use. I do not desire that you should write the labored, stiff character of an expert penman; a



man of business must write quickly and well, and that depends upon care and use. I would therefore advise you to apply yourself to your handwriting for a month only, which will be sufficient, for, upon my word, the writing of a gentle, plain hand of business is of much more importance than you think. It is your introduction to many, and to them, of course, creates the first impression, which is highly likely to last and to affect all your subsequent acquaintance.

You will say, it may be, that when you write so very ill, it is because you are in a hurry: where-upon I ask, Why are you ever in a hurry? A man of sense may be in haste but can never be in a hurry, because he knows that whatever he does in a hurry he must necessarily do very ill. He may be in haste to dispatch an affair, but he will take care not to let that haste hinder his doing it well.

Little minds are in a hurry when the object proves too big for them: they run, they hare; they puzzle, confound, and perplex themselves; they want to do everything at once, and the result is that they do nothing at all. But a man of sense takes the time necessary for doing well the thing he is about, and his haste to dispatch a business only appears by the continuity of his application to it; he pursues it with a cool steadiness, and finishes it before he begins any other.

I own that your time is much taken up, and you have a great many different things to do, but remember that you would much better do half of them

well and leave the other half undone than do them all indifferently.

There was a Pope, I think it was Alexander VII, who was justly ridiculed for his attention to little things, and his inability to rise to great ones, and was therefore called *maximus in minimis* and *minimus in maximis*. Why? Because he attended to little things when he had great ones to do. At this particular period of your life, and at the place where you are now, you have only little things to do; you should make it a habit to do them well, that they may require no attention from you when you have, as I hope you will have, greater things to mind. Make good handwriting habitual to you at this time, that you may have nothing but your matter to think of when you have occasion to write to kings and Ministers. Dance, dress, present yourself uniformly well now, that you may have none of these little things to think of hereafter.

As I am ever thinking of all things that can be of benefit to you, one thing has occurred to me which I think it necessary to mention; it is this: As your acquaintance in Paris enlarges it will be impossible for you to frequent your early friends as much as you did while you had no others. Now that you have so many new acquaintances you cannot be with the old as often as formerly, but pray take care not to give the old the least reason to think that you neglect them for the sake of the new and perhaps more dignified and shining acquaintances, which would be ungrateful and imprudent on your part, and never forgiven on theirs.

Call upon them often, though you do not stay as long as formerly; tell them you are sorry you are obliged to go away but that you have such and such engagements which you are obliged to keep.

I would have you in this and other ways take care to make as many personal friends as possible, and as few personal enemies. I do not mean by *personal friends* intimate and confidential friends, of which no man can hope for more than half a dozen in the course of his life, but I mean friends in the common acceptation of the word, that is, people who speak well of you, and who feel kindly toward you. Good-bye, my dear child.



## LIII

London, February 11, O. S., 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

When you go to the play, which I hope you do often, for it is a very instructive amusement, you must certainly observe the decidedly different effects which the several parts have upon you, according as they are well or ill acted. The best tragedy of Corneille's, if well spoken and acted, interests, engages, and agitates you. Love, terror, and pity in turn possess you. But if ill spoken and acted, it only excites indignation or laughter. Why? It is still Corneille's. It is the same sense, the same matter, whether well or ill acted. It is, then, merely the manner of speaking and acting that makes this great difference in the effect.

Apply this to yourself, and conclude from it that if you would either please in a private company or persuade in a public assembly your air, looks, gestures, graces, enunciation, proper accents, just emphasis, and tuneful cadences are full as necessary as the matter itself.

Let awkward, ungraceful, inelegant, and dull fellows say what they will in behalf of their solid matter and strong reasonings, and let them despise all those graces and ornaments which engage the senses and captivate the heart; they will find that their rough, unpolished matter, and their unadorned, coarse, albeit strong, arguments will neither please nor persuade, but, on the contrary, will wear out

attention and produce disgust. We are so made that we love to be pleased better than to be informed; information is, in a certain degree, mortifying, as it implies our ignorance; it must be sweetened to be palatable.

To bring this directly to you, remember that no man can make a figure in this country except through Parliament. Your fate depends upon your success there as a speaker; and, take my word for it, that success will turn much more upon manner than matter.

Pitt and Solicitor-General Murray are, beyond comparison, the best speakers. Why? Only because they are the orators. They alone can inflame or quiet the House; they alone are so attended to in that numerous and noisy assembly that you might hear a pin fall while either of them is speaking. Is it that their matter is better, or their arguments stronger, than other people's? Does the house expect extraordinary information from them? Not in the least. Pitt, particularly, has very little parliamentary knowledge; his matter is generally flimsy, and his arguments often weak; but his eloquence is superior, his action graceful, his enunciation just and harmonious; his periods are well turned; and every word he makes use of is the very best and the most expressive that can be used. This, and not his matter, made him paymaster, in spite of both King and Ministers.

From this draw the obvious conclusion. The same thing holds full as true in conversation, where even trifles, elegantly expressed, well looked, and

accompanied with graceful action, will ever please, beyond all the home-spun, unadorned sense in the world. Reflect, on the one hand, how you feel within yourself while you are forced to suffer the tedious, muddy, and ill-turned narration of some awkward fellow, even though the fact may be interesting; and on the other, with what satisfaction you attend to the relation of much less interesting matter when elegantly expressed, gently turned, and gracefully delivered.

By attending carefully to your daily conversation, grace of utterance will become habitual to you before you come into Parliament, and you will have nothing then to do but raise your voice a little when you are there.

I would wish you to be so attentive to this object that you will speak to your footman in the very best words of which the subject admits. Think of your words before you speak, choose the most elegant, and place them in the best order. Consult your own ear, to avoid cacophony, and, what is almost as bad, monotony. Think also of your gestures and looks when you are speaking even upon the most trifling subjects. The same things differently expressed, looked, and delivered cease to be the same things.

I knew a young man just elected a Member of Parliament who was laughed at for being discovered through the key-hole of his chamber-door speaking to himself in the glass, and forming his looks and gestures. I could not join in the laugh but on the contrary thought him much wiser than those who



laughed at him, for he knew the importance of those little graces in a public assembly, and they did not.

The worst-bred man in Europe, if a lady let fall her fan, would certainly pick it up and give it to her; the best-bred man in Europe could do no more. The difference, however, would be considerable; the latter would please by doing it gracefully; the former would be laughed at for doing it awkwardly.

I repeat it and repeat it again, and shall never cease repeating it to you; air, manners, graces, style, elegance, and all those ornaments must now be the sole objects of your attention; it is now or never that you must acquire them. Postpone therefore all other considerations; make them your serious study; you have not one moment to lose. The solid and ornamental united are undoubtedly best, but were I reduced to a choice I should without hesitation choose the latter. Good-night, then, my dear child.

## LIV

London, February 28, O. S., 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I do not love thee, Sabidius, nor can I say why;  
This only I can say, I do not love thee.

This translation of Martial has been rendered into a very familiar rhyme by Tom Brown:

I do not love thee, Dr. Fell,  
The reason why I cannot tell;  
But this alone I know full well,  
I do not love thee, Dr. Fell.

The epigram has puzzled many people, who cannot conceive how it is possible to fail to love a person, and yet not to know why. I think I perceive the meaning clearly. I take it to be this: *Dr. Fell, you are a worthy, deserving man; you have a thousand good qualities; you have a great deal of learning; I esteem, I respect you; but for the soul of me I cannot love you, though I cannot particularly say why! You have not those engaging manners, those pleasing attentions, those graces, and that address which are absolutely necessary to please, though impossible to define. I cannot say it is this or that particular thing that hinders me from loving you; it is the whole together; and upon the whole you are not agreeable.*

How often have I, in the course of my life, found myself in this situation with regard to many acquaintances whom I have honored and respected without being able to love!

There is a man whose moral character, deep learning, and superior parts I acknowledge, admire, and respect, but whom it is so impossible for me to love that I am almost in a fever when in his company. His figure, without being deformed, seems to disgrace or ridicule the common structure of the human body. His legs and arms are never in the position in which, according to the situation of his body, they ought to be, but constantly employed in committing acts of hostility upon the Graces. He throws anywhere but down his throat whatever he means to drink, and only mangles what he means to carve. Inattentive to all the requirements of social life, he mistimes or misplaces everything. His disputes are heated and indiscriminate, mindless of the rank, character, or situation of those with whom he disputes: absolutely ignorant of the several gradations of familiarity or respect, he is exactly the same to superiors, equals, and inferiors; and therefore by a necessary consequence he makes himself absurd to two of the three. Is it possible to love such a man? No. The utmost I can do for him is to consider him a respectable Hottentot.

I remember that when I came from Cambridge I had acquired, among the pedants of that illiberal seminary, a sauciness of literature, a turn to satire and contempt, and a strong tendency to argumentation and contradiction, but I had been out in the



world only a short while before I found that this would by no means do. I immediately tried to adopt the opposite character and began to conceal what learning I had, applauded often without approving, and yielded commonly without conviction; if I pleased others, between you and me, it was more owing to that habit than to any superior knowledge or merit.

Let me warn you against a besetting sin of mine which has done me measureless harm. At Cambridge, also, I fell in with the common custom of young people and acquired the use of sarcasm. It laid hold of me like any other bad habit, but, indeed, it is peculiarly tenacious and next to impossible to shake off. It wounds; it leaves a scar; and it is a sure recipe for making enemies. Shun it as you would the pestilence.

A versatility of manners is as necessary in social life as a versatility of parts in the political world. One must often yield in order to prevail; one must humble one's self to be exalted; one must, like St. Paul, become all things to all men to gain some men; and, by the way, men are taken by the same means that women are gained; by gentleness, insinuation, and submission.

In real, active life qualities like that of the chameleon, as I have said, are often necessary; nay, they must be carried a little further and exerted a little sooner; for you should, to a certain degree, take the hue of either the man or the woman that you wish to be upon terms with, but bear in mind

that all this must be carefully subordinated to your own nature so that you lose neither character nor individuality.

## LV

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I mentioned to you some time ago a sentence which I earnestly wish you always to retain in your thoughts and observe in your conduct. It is *suaviter in modo, fortiter in re*, which I translate, gentle in manner, resolute in deed.

I do not know any one rule so useful and necessary in every part of life. I shall therefore take it for my text to-day; and as old men love preaching, and I have some right to preach to you, I here present you with my sermon upon these words.

To proceed, then, regularly and *pulpitically*: I will first show you, my beloved, the necessary connection between the two members of my text. In the next place, I shall set forth the advantages and utility of a strict observance of the precept. And I shall conclude with an application of it.

The *suaviter in modo* alone would degenerate and sink into a mean, timid complaisance and passiveness, if not supported and dignified by the *fortiter in re*, which would run into impetuosity and brutality, if not tempered and softened by the *suaviter in modo*: however, they are seldom united.

The warm, choleric man, with strong, animal spirits, despises the *suaviter in modo*, and thinks to carry all before him by the *fortiter in re*. He may, possibly, by great accident now and then succeed, when he has only weak and timid people to deal



with, but his general fate will be to shock, offend, be hated, and fail.

On the other hand, the cunning, crafty man thinks to gain all his ends merely by the *suaviter in modo*; he has no opinion of his own, servilely adopts the present opinion of the present person, insinuates himself into the esteem of fools alone, but is soon detected, and surely despised by everybody else. The wise man, who differs as much from the cunning as from the choleric man, joins the *suaviter in modo* with the *fortiter in re*.

Now to the advantages arising from the strict observance of this precept. If you are in authority, and have a right to rule, your commands delivered *suaviter in modo* will be willingly, cheerfully, and in consequence well, obeyed, whereas if given only *fortiter*, that is, brutally, they will rather be interpreted than executed, as Tacitus says.

For my own part, if in a rough, insulting manner I bid my footman bring me a glass of wine, I should expect that in obeying me he would contrive to spill some of it upon me, and I am sure I should deserve it. A cool, steady resolution should show that where you have a right to command you will be obeyed, but at the same time a gentleness in the manner of enforcing that obedience should make it a cheerful one, and soften as much as possible the mortifying consciousness of inferiority.

If you are to ask a favor, or even to solicit your due, you must do it *suaviter in modo*, or you will give those who have a mind to refuse you an opportunity to do so under the pretext of resenting

your manner, but on the other hand, you must, by a steady perseverance and decent tenaciousness, show the *fortiter in re*.

The true motives of men are seldom the proper ones; especially is this true of kings, Ministers, and people in high station, who often give to importunity or through fear what they refuse to justice or merit. Engage the hearts of men by *suaviter in modo* if you can; at least forestall the pretense of offense, but take care to show enough of the *fortiter in re* to extort from their love of ease, or their fear, what you might in vain hope for from their good nature or sense of right.

People in high life are hardened to the wants and distresses of men, as surgeons are to their bodily pains; they see and hear of them all day long, and they meet with so many simulated ones that they do not know which are real and which are not. Other sentiments must therefore be applied to than those of mere justice and humanity; men's favor must be captured by the *suaviter in modo*; their laziness overcome by unwearied importunity; and their timidity wrought upon by a decent intimation of implacable, cool resentment; this is the true *fortiter in re*. This precept is the only recipe I know in the world for being loved without being despised, and feared without being hated. It constitutes the dignity of character which every wise man must endeavor to establish.

Now to apply what has been said, and so conclude.

If you find that you have a hastiness of temper which unguardedly breaks out into indiscreet sallies or rough expressions, watch it narrowly, check it carefully, and call the *suaviter in modo* to your assistance; at the first impulse of passion be silent till you can be soft. Labor even to get command of your countenance so well that the emotion of anger may not be read in it—an unspeakable advantage in business.

On the other hand let no complaisance, no gentleness of temper, no weak desire of pleasing on your part, no wheedling, coaxing, or flattery on the part of other people, make you recede one jot from any point that honor or reason or prudence has bid you pursue, but return to the charge, persist, persevere, and you will find most objects attainable.

Meekness, when yielding and timid, is always abused and insulted by the unjust or the unfeeling, but when sustained by the *fortiter in re* it is always respected and commonly successful.

In your friendships as well as your enmities this rule is particularly useful; let your firmness and vigor preserve and invite attachments, but at the same time let your manner hinder the enemies of your friends and dependents from becoming yours; let your enemies be disarmed by the gentleness of your manner, but let them feel at the same time the steadiness of your just resentment, for there is a great difference between bearing malice, which is always ungenerous, and a resolute self-defense which is ever prudent and justifiable.

In negotiations with foreign Ministers remem-



ber the *fortiter in re*; give up no point, accept no expedient, till the utmost necessity reduces you to it, and even then dispute the ground inch by inch; but while you are contending with the Minister *fortiter in re*, remember to gain the man by the *suaviter in modo*. If you engage his heart you have a fair chance for prevailing upon his understanding and bending his will. Tell him in a frank and gallant manner that your ministerial wrangles do not lessen your personal regard for his merit, but, on the contrary, his zeal and ability in the service of his master increase it, and that above all things you desire to make a good friend of so good a servant. By these means you create a little happiness, and you may and will often be a gainer: you never can be a loser.

Some people cannot be easy and civil to those who are their rivals, competitors, or opposers, though, independently of those accidental circumstances, they would like and esteem them. They betray shyness and awkwardness in company with them, and catch at any little thing to expose them, and so, from temporary and only occasional opponents, make them personal enemies. This is exceedingly weak and detrimental, as indeed is all ill humor in business, which can only be carried on successfully by unadulterated good policy and right reasoning.

In such situations I would be particularly civil, easy, and frank with the man whose designs I traversed; this is commonly received as generosity and magnanimity, but is, in truth, good sense. The

manner is often as important as the matter, sometimes more so; a favor may make an enemy, and an injury may make a friend, according to the manner. The countenance, the address, the words, the enunciation, the Graces, add great efficacy to the *suaviter in modo*, and great dignity to the *fortiter in re*; consequently they deserve the utmost attention.

## LVI

London, March 18, O. S., 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

On February 25th I brought into the House of Lords a bill for correcting and reforming our present calendar, which is the Julian, and for adopting the Gregorian.

I will now give you a particular account of the affair, from which reflections will naturally occur to you that I hope may be useful, and which I fear you have not as yet made.

It is well known that the Julian calendar is erroneous, and has overcharged the solar year with eleven days. Pope Gregory XIII corrected this error: his reformed calendar was immediately received by all the Catholic Powers of Europe, and was afterwards adopted by all the Protestant ones except Russia, Sweden, and England.

It was not, in my opinion, very honorable for England, as she has done for over a century and a half, to remain in a gross and avowed error, especially in such company: the inconvenience of it, moreover, has been felt by all who have foreign correspondence, whether political or mercantile, and those opposed to the change have been moved merely by prejudice against adopting a calendar devised by a Pope.

Any error so long established is hard to dislodge, but I determined to attempt the reformation; I consulted the best lawyers and the most skilled



astronomers. Mr. Davall, a barrister versed in astronomy, made the original draft of the bill together with most of the explanatory tables which were appended to it. Mr. Folkes, the president of the Royal Society, and Mr. Bradley, the royal astronomer at Greenwich, carefully examined the work of Mr. Davall. Others were consulted, among them the Duke of Newcastle, who was actually alarmed at so daring an undertaking, and asked me not to stir up a thing that had so long been quiet. Our bill therefore was backed by specialists, whereby we gained the golden weight of prestige.

But then my difficulty began: I was to bring in the bill, which was necessarily composed of law jargon and astronomical calculations, and to both I am an utter stranger. It was absolutely necessary, however, to make the Lords think I knew something of the matter, and also to make them believe that they knew something of it themselves, which they do not. For my part, I could just as well have talked Celtic or Slavonian to them as astronomy, and they would have understood me fully as well, so I resolved to do better than speak to the purpose, and to please instead of informing them.

I gave them therefore merely an historical account of calendars, from the Egyptian down to the Gregorian, and, according to my custom, amusing them now and then with pungent anecdotes, and emphasizing by repetition, but I was particularly attentive to the choice of my words, to the harmony and roundness of my periods, to my elocution, to my

action. This succeeded, and ever will succeed: they thought that I informed them, because I pleased them; and many of them said that I made the whole very clear to them, when, God knows, I had not even attempted it.

Lord Macclesfield, who had the greatest share in forming the bill as finally presented, who is one of the greatest mathematicians and astronomers in Europe, and who will himself be chosen president of the Royal Society next year, greatly aided the cause by a speech of profound knowledge, setting forth the facts with all the clearness of which so intricate a matter admits; his speech was in truth worth a thousand of mine, but as his words, his periods, and his utterance were not nearly as good as mine, the preference has been unanimously, though most unjustly, given to me. This will always be the case; every numerous assembly is a *mob*, whosoever the individuals who compose it. Mere reason and good sense are never to be talked to a mob: their passions, their sentiments, their senses, and their seeming interests are mainly to be applied to. Understanding, collectively, they have none, but they have ears and eyes, which must be flattered and seduced, and this can only be done by eloquence, tuneful periods, graceful action, and all the various parts of oratory.

I must make known to you, however, another element of my small triumph: your father has always held himself free from the jobbery so common in public office here and now, and has built up a reputation for probity in official life, which is

really more potent than even care and felicity of speech, for without a good character, or at least a good reputation, the Graces do not count, after all. I have always held that a public trust demands a higher standard of honor than private affairs, and by living up to this sentiment have gained a corresponding reputation, with its enormous value, especially helpful in establishing me as one of the leaders of my party in the House of Lords. I do not take great credit to myself, however, for Nature did not provide me with avarice, nor in fact with that other great, prevailing spring of action—ambition.

The bill passed second reading today and is, of course, that much nearer to becoming a law of the kingdom, but bear in mind that causes like this are won not merely by a few words spoken in a legislative body, important as such an aid may be. Recognizing this fact, I have not been remiss in promoting a sentiment favorable to the project. For some time I have been diligently writing on the subject, and already several articles from my pen have appeared in the magazines; I shall keep up the crusade until it wins, for win ultimately it must. Where you have so manifestly meritorious a cause, it is only a question of agitation—that great lever which moves mountains.

There is another phase of this incident with which you must be made acquainted, and to which, by the way, I refer without any jealousy whatever. A number of my colleagues have insisted that Lord Macclesfield's speech be prepared for pub-



lication as a part of the permanent historical record, and this will be done, so that his words will reach posterity while the destination of mine is oblivion. But this is a fair division of the glory—he will become immortal by what he said and I by what I accomplished. Good-bye, my dear child.

## LVII

## THE ORIGINAL IN FRENCH

*Translated by Eugenia Stanhope.*

London, April 15, O. S., 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

What success have you had with the Graces, and in the accomplishments, elegancies, and all those little nothings so indispensably necessary to make you beloved? Do you make progress in them? The great secret is the art of pleasing, and that art is to be attained by every man who has a good fund of common sense. To be liked by women, you must be esteemed by men; and to please men, you must be acceptable to women.

Vanity, unquestionably the ruling passion in women, is much flattered by the attentions of a man who is generally esteemed by men; when his merit has received the stamp of men's approbation, women make it current, that is to say, put him in fashion.

On the other hand, if a man has not received the last polish from women, he may be estimable among men, but beloved he will never be. The concurrence of the two sexes is as necessary to the perfection of our being as to the formation of it. Go among women with the good quality of your sex, and you will acquire from them the softness and the graces of theirs. Men will then add affection to

the esteem which they have for you. Women are the only refiners of the merit of men; they may not add weight, but they polish and give luster to it.

Young men will surely seek the companionship of women. It is an immutable law. And it follows that if they are not with good women they will be with bad ones. Don't think you can reverse the order of Nature or the application I make of it. If I find you do not seek among women the society of the worthy I shall know you consort with the vicious. In self-defense therefore I trust you will be found in the company of good women. And so we wish you a good-night.



## LVIII

London, June 24, O. S., 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Air, address, manners, and graces are of such infinite advantage to those who have them, and so peculiarly and essentially necessary for you, that now, as the time of our meeting draws near, I tremble for fear I shall not find you possessed of them, and, to tell you the truth, I doubt that you are yet sufficiently convinced of their importance.

As I open myself, without the least reserve, whenever I think that my doing so can be of any use to you, I will give you a short account of myself when I first came into the real world, at your present age. At the university I was an absolute pedant; when I talked my best, I quoted Horace; when I aimed at being facetious, I quoted Martial; and when I had a mind to be a fine gentleman, I talked Ovid. I was convinced that none but the ancients had common sense; that the classics contained everything that was necessary, useful, or ornamental; and I was not without thoughts of wearing the *toga virilis* of the Romans, instead of the vulgar and illiberal dress of the moderns.

With these excellent notions, I went first to The Hague, where, by the help of several letters of recommendation, I was introduced into the best company, and where I soon discovered that I was totally mistaken in almost every notion I had entertained. Fortunately I had a strong desire to

please, the mixed result of good nature and vanity, by no means blamable, and I was sensible that I had nothing but the desire. I therefore resolved to acquire also the means. I studied attentively and minutely the dress, the air, the manner, the address, the turn of conversation, and even the hand-shake of those I found to be the most generally acknowledged as pleasing. I imitated them as well as I could; I addressed myself to the most fashionable ladies, and laughed with them at my own awkwardness and rawness, recommending myself as an object for them to try their skill in reforming. With a passionate desire to please everybody, I came by degrees to please some, and I can assure you that what little figure I have made in the world has been due more to the desire to please than to intrinsic merit or to any sound learning of which I may have been master.

My passion for pleasing was so strong that I wished to cause every man and woman I met to admire me, and I cannot conceive how it is possible for any man of good nature and good sense to be without it. Does not good nature incline us to please all those with whom we converse, of whatever rank or station they may be? And do not good sense and common observation show of what infinite use it is to please? Oh; but one may please by the good qualities of the heart, and by learning, without that fashionable air, address, and manner, which is mere tinsel! I deny it. A man may be esteemed and respected, but I defy him to please without the Graces. Moreover, at your age, I did

not content myself with barely pleasing; I wanted to shine and to distinguish myself in the world. And that ambition or vanity, call it what you will, was proper; it hurt nobody and made me exert whatever talents I had. It is the spring of a thousand worthy and good things.



## LIX

London, December 19, O. S., 1751.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

You have now entered upon a scene of business where I hope you will one day make a figure. The first thing necessary in writing letters of business is extreme clearness and perspicuity; every paragraph should be so clear and unambiguous that the dullest fellow in the world may not be able to mistake it, and need not read it twice in order to understand it. This necessary clearness implies a correctness without excluding elegance of style.

Tropes, figures, antitheses, epigrams, would be as misplaced in letters of business as they are sometimes, if judiciously used, proper and pleasing in familiar letters. In business an elegant simplicity, the result of care, not of labor, is required. Business must be well, not affectedly, dressed, and by no means negligently. Let your first attention be to clearness; read over every paragraph after you have written it, in the critical view of discovering whether it is possible that anyone can mistake the true sense of it.

Business strictly requires the usual terms of politeness and good breeding, such as, *I have the honor to acquaint your Lordship; Permit me to assure you; If I may be allowed to give my opinion,* for the Minister abroad who writes to the Minister at home addresses his superior—possibly his patron, or at least one whom he desires to become so.

Letters of business are the better for certain *graces*, but they must be scattered with a sparing and skillful hand; they must fit their place exactly. They must decently adorn and not encumber; they must modestly shine and not glare. But I would not advise you to attempt these embellishments until you have first laid your foundation well.

Carefully avoid all Greek and Latin quotations, and bring no precedents from *the virtuous Spartans*, *the polite Athenians*, or *the brave Romans*. Leave all that to futile pedants. But there is dignity of style absolutely necessary for good letters of business: attend to it carefully. Let your periods be harmonious without being labored; and let them not be too long, for that always occasions a degree of obscurity.

I should not mention correct orthography but for the fact that you often fail in that particular, which will bring ridicule upon you, for no man is allowed to spell ill; it is no credit to spell correctly but a disgrace not to.

I wish, too, that your handwriting were much better, and I cannot conceive why it is not, since every man, as I have so often said, may certainly write whatever hand he pleases.

Neatness in folding up, sealing, and directing your packets is by no means to be neglected, though I dare say you think it may. There is something in the exterior, even of a packet, that may please or displease, and consequently the point is worthy of some attention.

You say that your time is well employed, and so it is, though as yet only in the outlines and first *routine* of business. They are necessary to be known; they smooth the way for parts and dexterity. Business requires no conjuration nor supernatural talents, as people unacquainted with it are likely to think. Method, diligence, and discretion will carry a man of good, strong common sense much higher than the finest parts without them.

Be upon your guard against the pedantry and affectation of business, which young people are prone to fall into. They look thoughtful, complain of the weight of business, throw out mysterious hints, and seem big with secrets which they do not possess. Do you on the contrary never talk of business but to those with whom you are to transact it, and learn to seem at ease when it presses the most.



## LX

London, January 6, O. S., 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I have recommended to you some inquiries into the constitution of that famous society, the Sorbonne. It was founded by Robert de Sorbon, in the year 1252, for sixteen poor students of divinity at the University of Paris, of which it formed a part; since then it has been much extended and enriched, especially by the liberality and pride of Cardinal Richelieu, who built a magnificent building for six-and-thirty Doctors of that Society to live in.

This society has been long famous for theological knowledge, in which the unintelligible points are debated with passion though they can never be determined by reason. In those sacred places logical subtleties set common sense at defiance, and mystical refinements disfigure and disguise the native beauty and simplicity of true, natural religion; wild imaginations form systems which weak minds adopt implicitly, and which sense and reason oppose in vain; their voice is not strong enough to be heard in schools of divinity; political views are by no means neglected, and questions are agitated and decided according to the degree of regard, or rather submission, which the Sovereign is pleased to show the Church.

But there is another religious society, of which the minutest circumstance deserves attention and

furnishes matter for useful reflections. You easily guess that I mean the Jesuits, established in the year 1540 by a Bull of Pope Paul III.

Its progress, and I may say its victories, were more rapid than those of the Romans, for within the same century it governed all Europe, and in the next it extended its influence over the whole world.

Its founder was an abandoned, profligate Spanish officer, Ignatius Loyola, who, in the year 1521, was wounded at the siege of Pamplona. During his confinement he read the lives of the saints. Consciousness of guilt, a fiery temper, and a feverish mind furnished the other common ingredients of enthusiasm, which turned to religion. He went to the Holy Land, from whence he returned to Spain, where he began to learn Latin and philosophy at three-and-thirty years old, so that no doubt he made great progress in both. The better to carry his designs, he chose disciples, or rather apostles. He then composed the rules and constitution of his order, under which the interests of the individual were completely surrendered to the Society.

Ignatius died in 1556, thirty-five years after his conversion, and sixteen years after the establishment of his society. He was beatified and canonized, and is doubtless now a saint in heaven.

If the religion and moral principles of the Jesuits are to be detested, as they justly are, the wisdom of their political principles is as greatly to be admired.

Suspected, collectively as an order, of the greatest crimes, and convicted of many, they have either escaped punishment, or triumphed after it, as in France, in the reign of Henry IV.

They have, directly or indirectly, governed the consciences and the councils of all the Catholic princes of Europe; they almost governed China in the reign of Shun-chi; and they are now actually in possession of Paraguay, pretending but paying no real obedience to the crown of Spain. As a collective body they are detested even by Catholics, not excepting the clergy, and yet, as individuals, they are loved and respected, and they govern wherever they are.

Two things, I believe, chiefly contribute to their success.

The first is the passive, implicit, unlimited obedience to their General, and to the Superiors of their several houses appointed by him. This obedience is observed by all of them to a most astonishing degree; and I believe there is no other society in the world in which so many members sacrifice their private interests to the general welfare of the Society itself.

The second is the education of youth, which they have in a manner appropriated. In this they seize the first impressions, which are the lasting ones, as I have so often said.

I have known many Catholics educated by the Jesuits, who, from reason and knowledge, detested the Society, yet, from habit and prejudice, always remained attached to it. The Jesuits better than



any set of people in the world know the importance of the art of pleasing; they become all things to all men, in order to gain—not a few, but many. In Asia, Africa, and America they become more than half pagans in order to convert the pagans to be less than half Christians. In private families they begin by insinuating themselves as friends, they grow to be favorites, and they end *directors*. Their manners are not like those of any other Regulars in the world, but gentle, polite, and engaging. They are carefully bred up to that particular destination to which they seem to have a natural turn; for this reason most Jesuits excel in some particular thing.

Inform yourself minutely of everything concerning this extraordinary establishment: go into their houses, become acquainted with individuals, hear some of them preach.

Upon the whole, this is certain—that a society of which so little good is said, and so much ill believed, and that still not only subsists but flourishes, must be a very able one. It is always mentioned as a proof of the superior abilities of Cardinal Richelieu that, hated by all the nation, and still more by his master, he kept his power in spite of both.

Good-bye, child.

## LXI

London, March 5, O. S., 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Whatever business you have, do it at the first practicable moment, never by halves, and finish it without interruption. Business must not be trifled with; you must not say to it, as Felix did to Paul, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." The most convenient season for business is the first, but study and business in some measure point their own times to a man of sense.

Time is often squandered in the wrong choice, and in improper methods, of amusement and pleasure. Many people think that they are in pleasures provided they are neither in study nor business. They contract habitudes from laziness, and they only frequent those places where they are free from all restraints and attentions.

Be upon your guard against this idle profusion of time, and let every place you frequent be either the scene of quick and lively pleasures, or the school of your improvement. Let every company you go into either gratify your senses, extend your knowledge, or refine your manners. Have some worthy object of adoration in view at some places; visit others where people of wit and taste assemble; seek still others where people of superior rank and dignity command respect and attention; but, pray, never choose neutral places from mere indolence. Nothing forms a young man so much as being used to keep-

ing approved and superior company, in which constant attention is necessary. It is true that this is at first a disagreeable restraint, but it soon grows habitual and consequently easy, and you are amply paid for it by the improvement you make and the credit it gives you.

All this I went through myself when I was your age. I have sat hours in company without being taken the least notice of, but I took notice of the others, and learned how to behave better myself, till by degrees I became part of the best companies. But I exercised great care not to lavish my time on those companies where neither quick pleasures nor useful improvements were to be expected. And so we heartily bid you good-night.



## LXII

London, May 31, O. S., 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

The world is a book, and the only one to which, at present, I would have you apply yourself; the thorough knowledge of it will be of more use to you than all the books that ever were read. Lay aside the best book whenever you can go into the best company, and depend upon it you change for the better.

However, as the most tumultuous life, whether of business or pleasure, leaves daily some vacant moments in which a book may well be the refuge of a rational being, I mean now to point out to you the method of employing those moments in the most advantageous manner.

Throw away none of your time upon those trivial books published by idle or necessitous authors for the amusement of ignorant readers; such books swarm and buzz about one every day; flap them away.

Have some one object for leisure moments; pursue that object invariably until you have attained it, and then take some other. For instance, considering your destination, I would advise you for the present to single out the most remarkable and interesting era of modern history, and confine your reading to that. If you pitch upon the Treaty of Münster, do not interrupt it by dipping and deviating into other books unrelated to it, but consult

only the most authentic histories, memoirs, and negotiations relative to that great transaction, reading and comparing them with all the caution and distrust which Lord Bolingbroke recommends to you in a better manner and in better words than I can.

I do not mean that you should plod for hours together in researches of this kind; you may employ your time more usefully; but I mean that you should make the most of the moments you do employ by the pursuit of one single object at a time.

This advice may be reduced to two or three plain principles: First, you should now read very little, but converse a great deal; Second, you should read no useless, unprofitable books; Third, those which you do read should all tend to a certain object and be related to one another. By this method half an hour's reading every day will carry you a great way.

People seldom know how to employ their time to the best advantage till they have too little left to employ; but if, at your age, in the beginning of life, you would but consider the value of it and make every moment count, it is incredible what an additional fund of learning such an economy would bring in.

## LXIII

London, September 29, 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

There is nothing more difficult for you young fellows than to behave prudently towards those whom you do not like. Your passions are warm and your heads are light; you hate all those who oppose your views, either of ambition or love; and a rival in either is almost a synonymous term for an enemy. Whenever you meet such a man you are awkwardly cold to him at best, but often rude, and always desirous to give him some indirect slap.

This is unreasonable; one man has as good a right as another to pursue an employment or a love affair; but it is into the bargain extremely imprudent, because you commonly defeat your own purpose by it. I grant you that the situation is irksome; a man cannot help thinking as he thinks nor feeling what he feels, and it is a very tender and sore point to be thwarted; but prudence and abilities must check the effects though they cannot remove the cause. Both pretenders may make themselves disagreeable to a common lady-love when they spoil the company by their pouting, or their sparring, whereas if one of them has outward command enough of himself to be cheerful, gay, and easily and unaffectedly civil to the other, as if there were no manner of competition between them, the lady will certainly like him the better.



It is the same in business, where he who can best command his temper and his countenance will always have an advantage over the other. To fight without quarreling is a useful art which you may learn from the lawyers.

## LXIV

Bath, October 4, 1752.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I consider you now as at the Court of Augustus, where the desire of pleasing must animate you. You will see there, full as well, I dare say, as Horace did at Rome, how States are defended by arms, adorned by manners, and improved by laws. Nay, you have a Horace there, as well as an Augustus; I refer to Voltaire, who, by the way, is my junior in age by only two months. I have lately read over all his works that are published, though I had read them more than once before. I was induced to do this by his *History of Louis XIV*, which I have as yet read but four times; I wish to forget it a little before I read it a fifth. I thought myself fairly conversant with the history of the reign of Louis XIV by means of those innumerable histories, memoirs, and anecdotes relative to that period which I have read in the past, but Voltaire has convinced me that I was mistaken, and had upon the subject confused ideas in many respects, and false ones in others. In re-reading his works, with more attention, I suppose, than before, my former admiration of him, I own, is turned into astonishment. There is no kind of writing in which he has not excelled.

You are so severe a Classic that I question whether you will allow me to call his *Henriade* an epic poem, for want of the proper number of gods,

devils, witches, and other absurdities requisite for the machinery. But whether you do or not, I declare, though possibly to my own shame, that I never read an epic poem with as much pleasure. I have grown old, and have possibly lost a great deal of that fire which formerly made me love fire, in others at any rate, however attended with smoke: but now I must have all sense, and cannot for the sake of five righteous lines forgive a thousand absurd ones.

In such a disposition of mind, judge whether I can read Homer through continuously. I admire his beauties, but, to tell you the truth, when he slumbers I sleep. Virgil, I confess, is all sense, and therefore I like him better than his model, but he is often languid, especially in his last five or six books.

But what will you say when I tell you truly that I cannot possibly read our countryman, Milton! I acknowledge that he has some sublime passages, some prodigious flashes of light, but then you must admit that light is often followed by *darkness visible*, to use his own expression. Besides, I have not the honor of being acquainted with any of the individuals in his poem except the man and the woman, so the characters and speeches of a dozen or two angels, and of as many devils, are as much above my reach as beyond my entertainment. Keep this secret for me; if it should be known I should be abused by every tasteless pedant and every solid divine in England.



I long to read Voltaire's *Rome Sauvée*, which I am sure I shall like, for I will at any time give up a good deal of regularity for a great amount of the brilliant, and for the brilliant surely nobody is equal to Voltaire. I admire him exceedingly as an epic, a dramatic, or a lyric poet, or as a prose writer. His *Henriade* is all sense from the beginning to the end, often adorned by the most lively and just reflections, the most beautiful descriptions, the noblest images, and the most exalted sentiments, not to mention the harmony of the verse, in which Voltaire undoubtedly excels all the French poets: should you insist upon an exception in favor of Racine, I must insist, on my part, that he at least equals him.

I could expatiate as much upon all his different works. How delightful is his history of that Northern brute, Charles XII, of Sweden! I cannot call him a man, and I should be sorry to have him pass for a hero, out of regard for those true heroes, such as Julius Caesar, Titus, Trajan, and the present King of Prussia, who have cultivated and encouraged arts and sciences, whose animal bravery has been accompanied by the tender and social sentiments of humanity, and who have had more pleasure in improving than in destroying their fellow creatures. What can be more touching or more interesting, what more nobly thought or more happily expressed, than all Voltaire's dramatic pieces? What can be more clear and rational than all his philosophical letters? And what is so graceful and gentle as all his little poetical trifles?

On the other hand, ten years ago at Brussels, he recited to me several passages from his *Mahomet*, in which I found beautiful lines, and some thoughts more brilliant than just; but I perceived at once that he attacked Jesus Christ under the character of Mahomet, and I was surprised that this had been overlooked at Lille, where it was played just before I passed through there. I even found at Lille a good Catholic, whose zeal surpassed his penetration, extremely edified by the manner in which that impostor and enemy of Christianity was portrayed. I doubt very much that it is justifiable for a man to write contrary to the creed of his country even if honestly convinced that it is erroneous, on account of the trouble and disorder that he might cause; but I am very certain that it is by no means permissible to attack the foundations of morality, and to break bonds so necessary, which are already too weak to hold men to their duty.

You are fortunately in a position to verify, by your knowledge of the man, all that I have said of his works.

Good-night to you, child, for I am going to bed just at the hour when I suppose you, in Berlin, are beginning to live.

## LXV

London, January 15, 1753.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Young men are as wont to think themselves wise as drunken men are to think themselves sober. They look upon spirit to be a much better thing than experience, which they call coldness.

They are but half mistaken; though spirit without experience is dangerous, experience without spirit is languid and defective. Their union, which is rare, is perfection: *you* may join the two if you please, for all my experience is at your service, and I do not desire one grain of your spirit of youth in return. Use them both, and let them reciprocally animate and check each other. I mean by *spirit of youth* only the vivacity and presumption of youth, which hinders one from seeing the difficulties or dangers of an undertaking; I do not mean the silly, vulgar spirit which makes one captious, jealous of his rank, suspicious of being undervalued, and tart in repartee upon the slightest occasion. This is an evil which should be driven out.

A man of honor is one who peremptorily affirms himself to be so, and will cut anybody's throat that questions it, though upon the best grounds. He is infinitely above the restraints which the laws of God or man lay upon the vulgar; he knows no other ties but those of honor, of which word he is the sole expounder. He must strictly adhere to the denomination of a party, though he may be



utterly regardless of its principles. His expense should exceed his income considerably, not for the necessities but for the superfluities of life, that the debts he contracts may do him honor. There should be a haughtiness and insolence in his deportment, which is supposed to result from conscious honor. If he be choleric, and wrong-headed into the bargain, with a good deal of animal bravery, he acquires the glorious character of a man of nice and jealous honor, and if all these qualifications are duly seasoned with the choicest vices, the man of honor is complete, anything his wife, children, servants, or tradesmen may think to the contrary notwithstanding.

A seeming ignorance is very often a necessary part of worldly knowledge. It is, for example, commonly advisable to seem ignorant of what people offer to tell you, and to let them go on, though you know the tale already. Some have pleasure in telling because they think that they tell well, and maybe you can pick up a point from them; others have a pride in doing so, like that of a sagacious discoverer.

Always seem ignorant, unless to your most intimate friends, of all matters of private scandal and defamation, though you should hear them a thousand times. This seeming ignorance should be joined to thorough and extensive private information: and, indeed, this is the best method of procuring it, for most people have such a vanity in showing a superiority of information, though in the merest trifles, that they will tell you what they

ought not to rather than fail to show that they can tell you what you do not know.

Fish for facts, and take pains to be well informed of everything that passes, but fish judiciously, and not always, nor indeed often, in the shape of direct questions, which are a breach of taste, which put people on their guard, provoke falsehoods, and, often repeated, grow tiresome.

These necessary arts of the world require constant attention, presence of mind, and coolness.

Achilles, though invulnerable, always went to battle completely armed. Courts are to be the theaters of your wars, where you should ever be completely armed, even with the addition of a heelpiece. The least inattention, the least *distrac-tion*, may prove fatal. I would fain see you what Pope, you remember, calls *all-accomplished*: you have the means in your power; add the will, and you can bring it about.

No letter from you! Are you not well?

## LXVI

London, May 27, O. S., 1753.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Today I have been tired, jaded, nay, tormented, by the company of a most worthy, sensible, and learned man, but not a wise man, a near relation, who dined and passed the evening with me; he has no knowledge of the world, no manners, no address; he only talks by books.

He has formed in his own closet, from books, certain systems of everything, argues tenaciously upon those principles, and is both surprised and angry at whatever deviates from them.

His theories are good but, unfortunately, impracticable. Why? Because he has only read, and not conversed. He is acquainted with books but is an absolute stranger to men. Laboring with his matter, he is delivered of it with pangs; he hesitates, stops in his utterance, and always expresses himself inelegantly. His actions are ungraceful, so that, with all his merit and learning, I would rather converse six hours with the most frivolous tittle-tattle woman who knows something of the world than with him.

The preposterous notions of a systematic man who does not know the world try the patience of a man who does. It would be endless to correct his mistakes, nor would he take it kindly, for he has considered everything deliberately and is sure that he is right.



Impropriety is a characteristic of such persons, and a never-failing one. Regardless, because ignorant, of customs and manners, they violate them at every turn. They often shock though they never mean to offend, attending neither to the general character, nor the particular, distinguishing circumstances of the people to whom they talk.

Study the characters and manners of men and women, not only those which are outward, and consequently guarded, but the interior and domestic, and consequently less disguised. Take your notions of things, as by observation and experience you find they really are, and not as they should be, for they never are quite what they should be. For this purpose do not content yourself with general and common acquaintances, but, wherever you can, establish yourself with a kind of domestic familiarity in good houses.

Whenever any person of worth invites you to pass a few days at his country-house, accept the invitation. These visits will necessarily give you a versatility of mind, and a facility to adopt various manners and customs, for everybody desires to please those in whose house he is, and people are only to be pleased in their own way. Nothing is more engaging than a cheerful and easy conformity to people's manners, habits, and even weaknesses. When you are shown the fine hospitality of an invitation to a private home, be sure that you conform in all respects to the customs of the family; especially respecting hours for dining, which must be promptly observed. I would learn all games as they spring

up, would master all forms of popular diversion, and avoid whims of diet, so that you may prove what I term *an easy visitor*, which makes you ever a welcome one.

A young fellow should be, for good purposes, what Alcibiades was commonly for bad ones, a Proteus, assuming with ease, and wearing with cheerfulness, any shape. Heat, cold, luxury, abstinence, gravity, ceremony, easiness, learning, trifling, business, and pleasure are modes which he should be able to take, lay aside, or change occasionally with as much ease as he would take or lay aside his hat.

All this is only to be acquired by experience, keeping a great deal of company, analyzing every character and insinuating one's self into the familiarity of various acquaintances. A right, generous ambition to make a figure in the world necessarily gives the desire of pleasing; the desire of pleasing points out to a great degree the means of doing it; and the art of pleasing is, in truth, the art of rising, of making a figure and a fortune in the world.

Everyone should do his own drudgery. Thus distributed the burden falls lightly on each. It takes but a few moments a day to put away things when you have done with them, and to run the small errands arising out of your minor wants. Many people go through life asking others to be their errand-boys; it makes life easier for them, and saves their time; they accomplish their purpose in general, but at the loss of their friends, for people resent injustice in small matters even more than in greater ones; these little impositions rankle because

they offend the pride. At all events one ought to go through the world making others as little trouble as possible.

You are now of an age when most of your countrymen are at the University. You have greatly the start of them in learning; if you can get the start of them in knowledge and the manners of the world you may be sure of outrunning them in Court and Parliament. They set out upon their travels unlicked cubs, and they only lick one another, for they seldom go into company. They know nothing but the English world, and generally very little of language apart from English.

The care which has been taken of you has left you nothing to acquire but knowledge of the world, manners, address, and the exterior accomplishments. But they are great and necessary acquisitions to those who have sense enough to know their true value, and acquiring them before you enter upon the active and shining scene of life will give you such an advantage over your contemporaries that they cannot overtake you; they must be distanced.

Oil yourself therefore and be both supple and shining for that race, if you would be first, or early, at the goal. In the contest women, too, will most probably have something to say, and those who stand highest with them will probably stand highest in the world at large.

Labor over this great point, my dear child, indefatigably; attend to the smallest parts, the minutest graces, the most trifling circumstances that can possibly concur in forming the character of a



complete gentleman, a man of business and pleasure. In this view observe the effective part of every man who is liked and esteemed; attend to and imitate that particular accomplishment for which you hear him chiefly celebrated and distinguished; then collect those various parts and make yourself a mosaic of the whole, dominated, however, by your own individuality, as I have said before.

No one possesses everything, and almost everybody possesses some one thing worthy of imitation; choose your models well, and, in order to do so, choose by your ear more than by your eye. The best model is always that which is most universally allowed to be the best, though in strictness it may possibly not be so. We must take most things as they are; we cannot take them as we would, nor often as they should be; and where moral duties are not concerned it is more prudent to follow than to attempt to lead.

## LXVII

London, February 26, 1754.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I look upon myself now as *emeritus* in business, in which I have been engaged continuously for nearly forty years; I give it up to you; apply yourself to it as I have done for two score years, and then I consent to a philosophical retirement among your friends and your books.

Statesmen and beauties are rarely sensible of the gradations of their decay, and, too sanguinely hoping to shine on in their meridian, often set with contempt and ridicule. I retired in time, as Pope says:

before a sprightlier age  
Comes titt'ring on, and shoves you from the stage.

My only remaining ambition is to be the counselor and Minister of your rising ambition. Let me see my own youth revived in you; let me be your mentor, and, with your parts and knowledge, I promise you shall go far. You must bring activity and attention, and I will point out to you the proper objects for them.

I own that I fear but one thing for you—what we generally have the least reason to fear from a young man of your age; I mean your laziness, which, if you indulge it, will make you stagnate in contemptible obscurity all your life.

Men of affairs rank the cardinal requisites for success in the following order: integrity, industry, ability. It may surprise you to find industry rated above ability, but so it is.

I look upon indolence as a sort of *suicide*; for the Man is effectually destroyed, though the appetites of the Brute survive.

Accustom yourself therefore to be alert and diligent in your little concerns: never procrastinate, do not put off till tomorrow what you can do to-day; never do two things at a time; pursue your object, be it what it may, steadily and indefatigably; and let any difficulties rather animate than slacken your endeavors. Perseverance produces surprising effects.

I wish you would form the habit of translating every day three or four lines from some book in any language into the most correct and elegant English that you can think of; you cannot imagine how it will insensibly form your style and give you an habitual elegance: it would not take more than a quarter of an hour a day. So good-night.



## LXVIII

London, March 16, 1759.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

Your letter of the twentieth is before me; you make use of Spanish words very properly. If I were you I would learn the language if there is a Spaniard at Hamburg who can teach it; then you will be master of all the European tongues that are useful; and, to my mind, it is very convenient, if not necessary, for a public man to understand them all, and not to be obliged to have recourse to a translator for those papers that chance or business may throw in his way.

I learned Spanish when I was older than you are now. I realized that it would be an easy task for one who has mastered Latin; I knew it was likely to be of advantage to anyone residing in a land having relations with Spanish-speaking countries; and I was convinced by experience that in everything possible it would be better for me to trust myself rather than any other person, for translators are sometimes unfaithful, and still more often incorrect, puzzling, or blundering.

Let it be your maxim through life to know all you can know yourself, and never to trust implicitly to the information of others, but, in reason, to verify it. This rule has been of infinite service to me in the course of my life.

Take care of your health; *to be, or not to be,* is a question of much less importance, in my mind,

than *to be or not to be well*; or, in the words of Major Russell, "It is not so important to live a long while as to be comfortable while you do live."

Our habits with respect to eating have much to do with our thinking. Regularity in alimentation and elimination are the accompaniments of clear and accurate mental processes, and proper nourishment of the body enriches the mind, especially when both are developing in the yet imperfect man.

The sayings of Lucullus have been long forgotten while the words of Plato are immortal; the reason is not hard to find—one was renowned for his feasts; the other was noted for his simple manner of living.

Louis Cornaro, whose life was despaired of at forty—so nearly was he destroyed by high and fast living—adopted a simple regimen and lived to be nearly a hundred years old. He has left an account of his manner of living which I hope you will consider.

Climate, occupation, and environment should be reckoned with in determining diet. No exact rules can be laid down but one must learn for himself what best suits his own system. Alcohol in whatever form has no nutritive value. Wine stimulates digestion for a time only; in the end it clogs the liver and impairs the intellect.

Endeavor not to eat alone. There is an element in sociability not explained in science which gives to food a vitality we ought not to ignore. The recorded sayings of our Lord were largely made

at meals. Dining and talking have gone hand in hand down the ages. In combination each exalts the other.

And so we heartily bid you Farewell.



## LXIX

London, April 27, 1759.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I have your recent letters, and I will begin my answer to them by observing to you that a wise man, without being a stoic, in all misfortunes that befall him considers their best side as well as their worst; for everything has a better and a worse side; I have strictly observed this rule for many years, and have found by experience that some comfort is to be extracted by considering adversity in every light, instead of dwelling, as people do, upon the gloomy side.

Do not think that all I have said is the consolation of a metaphysical old fellow, almost insensible to pleasure or pain, offered to a young fellow who has quick sensations of both. No; it is the rational philosophy taught by experience and knowledge of the world which I have practiced for over thirty years. I have always made the best of the best, and have never made bad worse by fretting, which has enabled me to go through the various scenes of life in which I have been an actor with more pleasure and less pain than would most people.

You will say, perhaps: "One cannot change his nature; if a person is born with a very sensitive, gloomy temper, and sees things in the worst light, he cannot help it, nor new-make himself."

I will admit it to a certain degree; we cannot totally change our natures, but we may in a great

measure correct them by reflection and philosophy, and some philosophy is a necessary companion in this world, where, even for the most fortunate, the chances are greatly against happiness. Good-night! Be neither transported nor depressed by the accidents of life.

## LXX

London, December 27, 1765.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I arrived here from Bath last Monday, rather better than when I went thither.

You have had from the office an account of what Parliament did, or rather did not do, the day of its meeting; I mean the affair of our American Colonies, relative to the lately imposed stamp duty, which they absolutely refuse to pay.

The Administration are for some indulgence and forbearance to those froward children of their mother country: the opposition are for taking vigorous measures, as they call them, but I call them violent, and to have the tax collected by the troops.

For my part, I never saw a froward child mended by whipping, and I would not have the mother country become a stepmother.



## LXXI

Blackheath, August 1, 1766.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

The curtain was at last drawn up the day before yesterday and disclosed the new actors, together with some of the old ones. Pitt, who had *carte blanche* given him, named every one of them: but for what position would you think he named himself? Lord Privy Seal, and (what will astonish you, as it does every mortal here) Earl of Chatham. The joke here is that he has had *a fall up stairs* and he has done himself so much hurt that he will never be able to stand upon his legs again. Everybody is puzzled how to account for this step, which to my mind had one of two causes; either he means to retire from business, or he has been the dupe of Lord Bute and a great lady. The latter seems to me more probable; it would surely not be the first time that great abilities have been duped by low cunning.

Be it what it will, he is now certainly only Earl of Chatham, and no longer Mr. Pitt in any respect whatever. Such an event, I believe, was never heard of before. To withdraw, in the fullness of his power, and in the utmost gratification of his ambition, from the House of Commons, which procured him his power, and which alone could insure it to him, and to go into that Hospital of Incurables, the House of Lords, is a measure so

unaccountable that nothing but proof positive could have made me believe it; but true it is.

God bless you!





MAXIMS OF  
LORD CHESTERFIELD



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# M A X I M S      O F L O R D   C H E S T E R F I E L D

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PREPARED FOR HIS SON JANUARY 15, 1753

*Selected and Edited*

A proper secrecy is the only mystery of able men; mystery is the only secrecy of weak and cunning ones.

If a fool knows a secret, he tells it because he is a fool; if a knave knows one, he tells it whenever it is to his interest to tell it. But women and young men are prone to tell what secrets they know, from the vanity of having been trusted. Put confidence in none of these.

Inattention to the present business, be it what it will—the doing one thing and thinking at the same time of another, or attempting to do two things at once—is the never-failing sign of a little, frivolous mind.

A man who cannot command his temper, his attention, and his countenance should not think of being a man of business. The weakest man in the world can avail himself of the passion of the wisest. The inattentive man cannot know business, and consequently cannot do it. And he who cannot command his countenance may as well tell his thoughts.

Distrust those who love you extremely upon a slight acquaintance, and without any visible reason.



Be upon your guard, too, against those who confess as their weaknesses all the cardinal virtues.

In your friendships let your confidence, and in your enmities let your hostilities, have certain bounds: make not the former dangerous, nor the latter irreconcilable. There are strange vicissitudes in business.

Smooth your way to the head through the heart. The way of reason is a good one; but it is commonly somewhat longer, and perhaps not so sure.

*Spirit* is now a fashionable word: to act with spirit, to speak with spirit, means only to act rashly, to talk indiscreetly. An able man shows his spirit by gentle words and resolute actions: he is neither hot nor timid.

When a man of sense happens to be in that disagreeable situation in which he is obliged to ask himself more than once, *What shall I do?* he will answer, *Nothing*. When his reason points out to him no good way, or at least no one way less bad than another, he will stop short and wait for light. A little, busy mind runs on at all events, must be in motion, and, like a blind horse, fears no dangers because it perceives none.

Patience is a most necessary qualification in business; many a man would rather you would hear his story than to grant his request. One must seem to hear the unreasonable demands of the petulant, unmoved; and the tedious details of the dull,

untired. That is the least price that a man should be willing to pay for a high station.

It is always right to detect a fraud and to perceive a folly, but it is often wrong to expose either. A man of business should always have his eyes open, but must often seem to have them shut.

In Courts, nobody should be below your management and attention: the links that form the Court-chain are innumerable and inconceivable. You must hear with patience the dull grievances of a gentleman usher, or a page of the back-stairs, for he probably has confidential relations with the favorite maid, with the favorite Minister, or perhaps with the king himself, and who, consequently, may do you more dark harm or indirect good than the first man of quality.

One good patron at Court may be sufficient, provided you have no personal enemies; and, in order to have none, you must sacrifice, as the Indians do to the Devil, most of your passions and much of your time to the numberless evil beings that infest royal places.

As kings are born like other men, it is to be presumed that they are of the human species; and perhaps had they the same environment they might prove to be like other men. But, flattered from their cradles, their hearts are corrupted and their heads are turned, so that they seem to be a species by themselves. Flattery cannot be too strong for them; drunk with it from their infancy, like old

drinkers they require drams. They prefer a personal attachment to a public service, and reward it better. They are vain and weak enough to look upon it as a free-will offering to their merit, and not as a burnt-sacrifice to their power.

If you would be a favorite of your king, address yourself to his weaknesses. An application to his reason will seldom prove successful.

In Courts, bashfulness and timidity are as prejudicial on the one hand as impudence and rashness on the other. A steady assurance and a cool intrepidity, with an exterior modesty, are the true and necessary medium.

Never apply for what you see little probability of obtaining; for you will, by asking improper or unobtainable things, accustom the Ministers to refuse you, and they will then find it easy to refuse the most proper and reasonable requests. It is a common rule at Court to ask for everything in order to get something, but it is a mistake; you do get something by it, it is true, but that something is refusals and ridicule.

There is a Court jargon, a chit-chat, a small talk, which turns singly upon trifles, and which, in a great many words, says little or nothing. It stands fools instead of what they cannot say, and men of sense instead of what they should not say. It is the proper language of levees, drawing-rooms, and antechambers: it is an art of which a foreign Minister ought to be a master; it is a kind of



political badinage which prevents or removes a thousand difficulties to which he is exposed in mixed conversations.

At Court, whatever else a man is, he must be gentle and well-bred; that cloak covers many follies.

Character is as necessary in business as in trade. No man can deceive often in either.

At Court, people embrace without acquaintance, serve without friendship, and injure without hatred. Interest, not sentiment, is the growth of that soil.

A difference of opinion, though in the merest trifles, alienates little minds, especially of high rank. It is fully as easy to commend as to blame a great man's cook, or his tailor: it is shorter too; and the objects are no more worth disputing about than the people are worth disputing with. It is impossible to inform, but easy to displease them.

A cheerful, easy countenance and behavior are useful at Court; they cause fools to think you a good-natured man, and designing men to think you disinterested.

Ceremony is necessary in Courts, as the out-work and defense of manners.

If a Minister refuses you a reasonable request, and either slights or injures you, and you have not the power to gratify your resentment, have the wisdom to conceal it. Seeming good-humor on your

part may prevent rancor on his, and perhaps set things right again; but if you have the power to hurt, hint modestly that if provoked you may possibly have the will also. Fear, at Courts, when real and well-founded, is perhaps a more prevailing motive than love.

Awkwardness is more of a disadvantage than it is generally thought to be: it often occasions ridicule; it always lessens dignity.

A man's own good breeding is his best security against other people's ill manners.

Good breeding carries with it a dignity that is respected by the most petulant. Ill breeding invites and authorizes the familiarity of the most timid. No man ever said a pert thing to the Duke of Marlborough; no man ever said a civil one, though many a flattering one, to Sir Robert Walpole.

Knowledge may give weight, but accomplishments give luster; and many more people see than weigh.

Most arts require long study and application, but the most useful art of all, that of pleasing, requires only the desire. It is to be presumed that a man of common sense who does not desire to please desires nothing at all, since he must know that he cannot obtain anything without it.

A skillful negotiator will by his manners and address endeavor at least to make his public adver-

saries his personal friends. He will never alienate people's minds from him by wrangling for points either absolutely unobtainable or not worth obtaining.

A foreign Minister who is concerned in great affairs must necessarily have spies in his pay; but he must not too easily credit their informations, which are never exactly true and often false. His best spies will always be those whom he does not pay, but whom he has engaged in his service by dexterity and address, and who think themselves nothing less than spies.

A foreign Minister should be a most exact economist; an expense proportioned to his appointments and fortune is necessary; but, on the other hand, debt is inevitable ruin to him. It sinks him into disgrace at the Court where he resides, and into the most servile and abject dependence on the Court that sent him. As he cannot resent ill usage he is sure to have enough of it.

The Duc de Sully observes justly in his *Memoirs* that nothing contributed more to his rise than that prudent economy which he had observed from his youth, and by which he had always a sum of money at hand to use in case of emergencies.

Take care always to form your establishment so much within your income as to have a sufficient fund for unexpected contingencies and prudent liberality. There is hardly a year in any man's life in which a small sum of ready money may not be employed to great advantage.



It is difficult to fix the particular point of economy; the better error of the two is on the parsimonious side. That may be corrected; the other cannot.

Reputation for generosity is to be purchased cheaply; it does not depend so much upon a man's general expense as it does upon his giving liberally where it is proper to give at all. A man, for instance, who should give a servant four shillings would pass for stingy, while he who gave him a crown would be reckoned generous; so that the difference between those two opposite reputations turns upon a shilling.

LORD CHESTERFIELD'S  
SPEECHES ON THE GIN ACT





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# LORD CHESTERFIELD'S SPEECHES ON THE GIN ACT

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## I

FEBRUARY 21, 1743

MY LORDS:

The Bill now under consideration appears to deserve a much closer regard than seems to have been paid to it in the other House, through which it was hurried with the utmost precipitation, and where it passed almost without the formality of a debate.

The law before us seems to be the effect of that practice of which it is intended to be the cause, and to be dictated by the liquor of which it so effectually promotes the use, for surely it never before was conceived by any man entrusted with the administration of public affairs to raise taxes by debauching the people.

The destruction of all the most laborious and useful part of the nation can alone be expected from the license which is now proposed to be given to drunkenness.

Nothing is more absurd than to assert that the use of spirits will be hindered by the Bill now before us, or indeed that it will not be in a very great degree promoted by it. For what produces all kinds of wickedness but the prospect of impunity on the one part, or the solicitation of opportunity on the other? Either of these has too frequently been sufficient to overpower the sense of morality, and even of religion, and what is not to be feared from

them when they shall unite their force and operate together, when temptations shall be increased and terror taken away?

It is acknowledged by those who have hitherto disputed on either side of this question that the people appear obstinately enamored of this new liquor; it is admitted that it corrupts the mind, enervates the body, and destroys vigor and virtue at the same time that it makes those who drink it too idle and too feeble for work, and, while it impoverishes them by the present expense, disables them from retrieving its ill consequences by subsequent industry.

It might be imagined that those who had thus far agreed would not easily find any occasion for dispute; nor would any man, unacquainted with the motives by which parliamentary debates are too often influenced, suspect that after the pernicious qualities of this liquor, and the general inclination among the people to the immoderate use of it, had been generally admitted, it could be afterwards inquired whether it ought not to be made more common, whether this universal thirst for poison ought not to be encouraged by the Legislature, and whether a new statute ought not to be made to secure drunkards in the gratification of their appetites.

To pretend, my Lords, that the design of this Bill is to prevent or diminish the use of spirits is to trample upon common sense, and to violate the rules of decency as well as of reason. For when did any man hear that a commodity was prohibited by

licensing its sale, or that to offer and refuse is the same action?

It is indeed pleaded that it will be made dearer by the tax which is proposed, and that the increase of the price will diminish the number of the purchasers, but it is at the same time expected that this tax will supply the expense of a war. It is asserted therefore that the consumption of spirits will be hindered, and yet that it will be such as may be expected to furnish from a very small tax a revenue sufficient for the support of armies, for the re-establishment of the Austrian family, and the repression of the attempts of France.

Surely these expectations are not consistent, nor can it be imagined that they are both formed in the same head, though they may be expressed by the same mouth. It is undoubtedly false that this tax will lessen the consumption of spirits, and it is certainly true that it will produce a very large revenue, a revenue that will not fail except with the people from whose debaucheries it arises.

Luxury is to be taxed, but vice prohibited, let the difficulties in executing the law be what they will. Would you lay a tax upon a breach of the Ten Commandments? Would not such a tax be scandalous? And would it not imply an indulgence to everyone who could pay the tax? Was not the principle involved the chief cause of the Reformation? And will you follow a precedent which brought reproach and ruin upon those who introduced it? This is the very case now before us. You propose to lay a tax, and consequently to in-



dulge a sort of drunkenness which almost necessarily produces a breach of every one of the Ten Commandments.

May I be allowed to congratulate my countrymen and fellow-subjects upon the happy times now approaching, in which no man will be disqualified from the privilege of being drunk; when all discontent and disloyalty will be forgotten, and the people shall acknowledge the leniency of that government under which all restraints are taken away?

To a Bill for such desirable purposes it would be proper, my Lords, to prefix a preamble, in which the kindness of our intentions should be more fully explained, that the nation may not mistake our indulgence for cruelty, nor consider their benefactors as their persecutors. If therefore this Bill be considered in committee, I shall humbly insist that it shall be proposed in this manner:

Whereas, The designs of the present Ministry, whatever they are, cannot be executed without a great number of mercenaries who cannot be hired without money; and

Whereas, The present disposition of this nation to drunkenness inclines us to believe that the subjects will pay more cheerfully for the undisturbed enjoyment of distilled liquors than for any other concession that can be made by the government;

Be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, That no man shall hereafter be denied

the right of being drunk on the following conditions.

Such, my Lords, to trifle no longer, is the proper preamble to this Bill, which contains only the conditions on which the people of this kingdom are to be allowed henceforward to riot in debauchery—in debauchery licensed by law and countenanced by the magistrates. For there is no doubt that those on whom the inventors of this tax shall confer authority will be directed to encourage the consumption of that liquor from which such large revenues are expected, and to multiply without end those licenses which are to pay a yearly tribute to the Crown.

By such unbounded license the price will be lessened, for the number of retailers will lessen the price, as in all other cases, and lessen it more than this tax will increase it. Besides, it is to be considered that at present the retailer expects to be paid for the danger which he incurs by pursuing an unlawful trade, and will not trust his reputation or his purse to the mercy of his customer without a profit proportioned to the hazard.

The specious pretense on which this Bill is founded, and indeed the only pretense that deserves to be termed even specious, is the propriety of taxing vice, but this maxim of government on this occasion has been either mistaken or perverted. Vice is not properly to be taxed, but suppressed; and heavy taxes are sometimes the only means by which that suppression can be attained. Luxury, or the excess of that which is pernicious only by its excess,

may very properly be taxed, that such excess, though not strictly unlawful, may be made more difficult. But the use of those things which are simply hurtful—hurtful in their own nature, and in every degree—is to be prohibited. No one ever heard in any nation of a tax upon theft or adultery, because a tax implies a license granted for the use of that which is taxed, to all who shall be willing to pay it.

Drunkenness is universally and under all circumstances an evil, and therefore ought not to be taxed but punished, and the means of it not to be made easy by a slight impost, which none will feel, but to be removed out of the reach of the people, and secured by the heaviest taxes, levied with the utmost rigor. I hope those to whose care the religion of the nation is particularly consigned will unanimously join with me in maintaining the necessity, not of taxing vice, but suppressing it, and unite for the rejecting of a Bill by which the future, as well as the present, happiness of thousands must be destroyed.



## II

FEBRUARY 24, 1743

MY LORDS:

The noble Lord has been pleased to excite us to an unanimous concurrence with himself and his associates in the Ministry, in passing this excellent and wonder-working Bill, which is to lessen the consumption of spirits without lessening the quantity which is distilled, which is to restrain drunkards from drinking by setting their favorite liquor always before their eyes; which is to conquer habits by continuing them. But such is my obstinacy, or such my ignorance, that I cannot yet comply with his proposal, nor can I prevail upon myself either to concur in a measure so apparently opposed to the public interest, or to hear it vindicated without declaring how little I approve.

During the course of this long debate I have endeavored to recapitulate and digest the arguments which have been advanced, and have considered them both separately and jointly, but find myself at the same distance from conviction as when I first entered the House.

In vindication of this Bill we have been told that the present law is ineffectual; that the manufacture of the liquor is not to be destroyed; that the security offered by the present Bill has induced great numbers to subscribe to the war fund; that it has

been approved by the Commons; and that if it be found ineffectual it may be amended at another session.

All these arguments I shall endeavor to examine.

With a very strong desire, though with no great hope, of finding the Ministry in the right, I venture to begin my inquiry, and engage in the examination of their first assertion that the present law against the abuse of strong liquors is without effect.

I hope it augurs well for my inquiry that the first position which I have to examine is true, and it may therefore be expected that, having agreed with the Ministers in their fundamental proposition, I should concur with them in the conclusion which they draw from it; and, having acknowledged that the present law is ineffectual, should admit that another is necessary.

But in order to discover whether this consequence is necessary, it must first be inquired why the present law is of no force? For it will be found upon reflection that there are certain degrees of corruption that may hinder the effect of the best laws. The magistrates may be vicious and forbear to enforce a law by which they themselves are condemned; they may be indolent, and inclined rather to connive at wickedness by which they are not injured themselves than to repress it by a laborious exercise of their authority; or they may be timorous, and, instead of awing the vicious, may be awed by them.

In any of these cases the law is not to be condemned for its inefficacy, since it only fails by the defect of those who direct its operations. The best and most important laws will contribute very little to the security or happiness of a people if no judges of integrity and spirit can be found among them.

I am therefore yet doubtful whether the inefficacy of the law now subsisting necessarily obliges us to provide another, for those that declared it to be useless owned at the same time that no man endeavored to enforce it; so that perhaps its only defect may be that it will not execute itself.

Great use has been made of the inefficacy of the present law, to decry the proposal of laying a high duty upon these pernicious liquors. High duties, as we are informed, have already been tried without advantage; high duties are at this hour imposed upon liquors which are retailed, yet we see them every day sold in the streets without the payment of the tax required, and therefore it will be folly to make a second essay of means which have been found unsuccessful for many years.

It has been granted on all sides in this debate, nor was it ever denied on any other occasion, that the consumption of any commodity is most easily hindered by raising its price, and that its price is to be raised by the imposition of a duty. This, my Lords, which is, I suppose, the opinion of every man, of whatever degree of experience or understanding, appears likewise to have been thought of by the authors of the present law; and therefore they imagined that they had effectually provided against



the increase of drunkenness by laying upon that liquor which should be retailed in small quantities a duty which none of the inferior classes of drunkards would be able to pay.

Thus they conceived that they had reformed the common people without infringing the pleasures of others, and applauded the happy contrivance by which spirits are to be made dear only to the poor, while every man who can afford to purchase two gallons is at liberty to riot at his ease, over a full, flowing bumper, and look down with contempt upon his former companions, now ruthlessly condemned to disconsolate sobriety.

But this intention was frustrated, and the project, ingenious as it was, fell to the ground, for a plain reason. Though they laid a tax, they unhappily forgot that it would make no addition to the price unless it was paid, and that it would not be paid unless some means were provided to collect it.

Here was the difficulty; those who made the law were inclined to lay a tax from which they themselves should be exempt, and therefore would not charge the liquor as it issued from the still; and when once it was dispersed in the hands of petty dealers, it was no longer to be found without the assistance of informers; and informers could not carry on the business of prosecution without the consent of the people.

It is not necessary to dwell at greater length upon the law the repeal of which is proposed, since it appears already that it failed only from a partiality



not easily defended, and from the omission to collect the duty from the still-head.

If this method be followed there will be no longer any need of informations, or of any rigorous or new measures; the same officers who collect a smaller duty may levy a greater; nor can they be easily deceived with regard to the quantities that are made; the deceits that can be used are in use already; they are easily detected and suppressed, nor will a larger duty enable the distillers to elude the vigilance of the officers with more success.

Against this proposal therefore the inefficacy of the present law can be no objection. But it is urged that such duties would destroy the trade of distilling; and a noble Lord has been pleased to express great tenderness for a manufacture so beneficial and extensive. That a large duty levied at the still would destroy or very much impair the trade of distilling is certainly supposed by those who defend it, for they devised it only for that end; and what better method can they propose when they are called to deliberate upon a Bill for the prevention of the excessive use of distilled liquors?

The noble Lord has been pleased kindly to inform us that the trade of distilling is very extensive, that it employs great numbers, and that they have arrived at exquisite skill, and therefore—note well the consequence—the trade of distilling is not to be discouraged.

Once more allow me to wonder at the different conceptions of different understandings. It appears

to me that since the spirits which the distillers produce are acknowledged to enfeeble the limbs and vitiate the blood, to pervert the heart, and to obscure the intellect, that the number of distillers should be no argument in their favor; for I never heard that a law against theft was repealed or delayed because thieves were numerous. It appears to me, my Lords, that if so formidable a body are confederated against the virtues or the lives of their fellow-citizens, it is time to put an end to the havoc, and to interpose while it is yet in our power to stop the destruction.

So little am I affected with the merit of the wonderful skill which the distillers are said to have attained that, in my opinion, it is not a faculty of great use to mankind to prepare palatable poison; nor shall I ever contribute my influence for the reprieve of a murderer because he has, by long practice, obtained great dexterity in his trade.

If the liquors are so delicious that the people are tempted to their own destruction, let us secure them from these fatal draughts by bursting the vials that contain them; let us crush at once these artists in slaughter who have reconciled their countrymen to sickness and ruin, and have spread over the pitfalls of debauchery such baits as cannot be resisted.

I cannot yet discover why a reprieve of a year, as suggested, is desired for this manufacture, nor why the present year is not equally propitious for the reformation of mankind with any that may succeed it. It is true that we are at war, but war

may be better prosecuted without money than without men; and we but little consult the military glory of our country if we raise supplies for paying our armies by the destruction of those armies that we are contriving to pay.

The ready compliance of the Commons with the measures proposed in this Bill has been mentioned here with a view, I suppose, of influencing us, but surely by those who had forgotten our independence, or resigned their own. It is not only the right but the duty of each House to deliberate without regard to the determinations of the other: for how should the nation receive any benefit from the distinct powers that compose the Legislature unless the determinations are without influence upon each other? If either the example or the authority of the Commons can divert us from following our own convictions we are no longer a part of the Legislature; we have given up our honors and our privileges; and what then is our concurrence but slavery, or our suffrage but an echo?

The only argument therefore that now remains is the expediency of gratifying those by whose ready subscription the present exigencies have been supported, and of continuing the security by which they have been encouraged to such liberal contributions.

Public credit, my Lords, is indeed of very great importance, but public credit can never be long supported without public virtue; nor indeed, if the government could mortgage the morals and health of the people, would it be just and rational to confirm the bargain. If the Ministry can raise money



only by the destruction of their fellow-subjects, they ought to abandon those schemes for which money is necessary; for what calamity can be equal to unbounded wickedness?

In conclusion, when I consider, my Lords, the tendency of this Bill, I find it calculated only for the propagation of disease, the suppression of industry, and the destruction of mankind. I find it the most fatal engine that ever was pointed at a people; an engine by which those who are not killed will be disabled, and those who preserve their limbs will be deprived of their senses.



## SCHEDULE OF NEW MATTER

Matter of substance has been interpolated as indicated by the schedule appended. It may be understood by the aid of the following examples:

21: 1, 1-. This indicates that matter is added on page 21 from line 1, word 1, being the first word of the letter proper, to the end of the page.

29: 1, 1-3, 7; 4, 6-6, 7. This indicates that matter is added on page 29 from line 1, word 1, to line 3, word 7, inclusive, of the letter proper, and from line 4, word 6, to line 6, word 7, inclusive.

Figures in italics indicate words of Chesterfield borrowed from his other writings.

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21: 1, 1-.	42: 7, 1-14, 8.
24: 10, 1-.	23, 5-24, 2.
28: 6, 1-19, 10.	44: 11, 3-12, 9.
29: 1, 1-3, 7.	45: 1, 8-13, 1.
4, 6-6, 7.	32, 1-32, 2.
30: 3, 4-4, 3.	49: 21, 1-.
18, 1-19, 3.	50: 1, 1-16, 8.
24, 6-.	18, 5-18, 7.
31: 1, 1-8, 7.	21, 1-21, 2.
32: 2, 9-3, 3.	24, 7-27, 4.
33: 12, 9-18, 1.	52: 18, 1-.
34: 2, 6-5, 4.	53: 1, 1-.
24, 1-26, 1.	54: 1, 1-.
35: 18, 7-20, 6.	64: 1, 1-3, 2.
36: 1, 1-.	6, 1-8, 1.
39: 7, 7-.	16, 1-21, 4.

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|--------------------|--------------------|
| 65: 12, 6-17, 5.   | 3, 6-4, 1.         |
| 67: 4, 6-5, 5.     | 4, 2-.             |
| 12, 9-13, 3.       | 138: 3, 7-4, 1.    |
| 24, 5-.            | 140: 9, 1-19, 7.   |
| 68: 21, 1-.        | 20, 1-21, 3.       |
| 69: 1, 1-.         | 21, 4-22, 5.       |
| 78: 3, 7-9, 6.     | 22, 6-24, 8.       |
| 82: 25, 3-26, 2.   | 24, 9-.            |
| 83: 17, 1-.        | 142: 7, 1-25, 2.   |
| 84: 1, 1-7, 1.     | 25, 3-30, 1.       |
| 86: 13, 2-15, 6.   | 144: 14, 4-22, 5.  |
| 32, 1-.            | 146: 11, 1-22, 5.  |
| 87: 1, 1-.         | 147: 4, 10--8, 1.  |
| 95: 12, 1-18, 4.   | 8, 5-9, 1.         |
| 97: 23, 8-25, 7.   | 149: 2, 6-3, 8.    |
| 99: 3, 7-8, 5.     | 13, 8-14, 7.       |
| 100: 18, 10-20, 1. | 152: 25, 1-.       |
| 101: 20, 7-27, 4.  | 153: 13, 1-17, 10. |
| 31, 1-.            | 156: 9, 1-14, 6.   |
| 102: 1, 1-3, 6.    | 26, 1-.            |
| 22, 2-22, 4.       | 157: 1, 1-7, 5.    |
| 109: 12, 1-.       | 158: 19, 4-.       |
| 110: 1, 1-1, 7.    | 160: 4, 1-.        |
| 113: 6, 2-6, 7.    | 161: 1, 1-13, 6.   |
| 115: 14, 8-15, 6.  | 165: 12, 5-14, 8.  |
| 116: 2, 6-5, 7.    | 166: 1, 1-8, 7.    |
| 119: 4, 1-.        | 17, 2-19, 3.       |
| 131: 10, 3-15, 5.  | 168: 4, 9-5, 5.    |
| 133: 12, 3-14, 8.  | 20, 3-.            |
| 23, 1-23, 5.       | 173: 9, 4-10, 6.   |
| 25, 4-.            | 11, 4-11, 7.       |
| 134: 1, 1-3, 5.    | 23, 3-24, 2.       |

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|-------------------|-------------------|
| 174: 12, 9-       | 208: 20, 6-21, 5. |
| 175: 1, 1-        | 219: 3, 8-        |
| 178: 1, 9-2, 5.   | 220: 7, 5-8, 6.   |
| 180: 7, 2-10, 1.  | 13, 10-20, 5.     |
| 189: 9, 1-17, 5.  | 223: 1, 1-1, 4.   |
| 31, 8-            | 1, 5-1, 7.        |
| 190: 1, 1-        | 1, 8-19, 8.       |
| 191: 4, 6-5, 6.   | 224: 20, 1-       |
| 195: 15, 7-16, 2. | 225: 1, 1-14, 1.  |
| 197: 1, 1-1, 3.   | 21, 1-21, 10.     |
| 21, 5-24, 1.      | 226: 6, 2-6, 6.   |
| 198: 1, 2-7, 7.   | 228: 27, 6-       |
| 8, 1-11, 2.       | 229: 1, 1-4, 3.   |
| 11, 3-13, 1.      | 22, 1-            |
| 199: 9, 2-10, 6.  | 230: 1, 1-3, 2.   |
| 28, 1-            | 231: 7, 5-8, 7.   |
| 200: 1, 1-10, 8.  | 233: 1, 1-4, 6.   |
| 10, 9-13, 1.      | 234: 12, 3-16, 1. |
| 14, 1-            | 23, 6-24, 2.      |
| 201: 1, 1-6, 1.   | 235: 1, 9-9, 8.   |
| 203: 4, 1-12, 8.  | 15, 1-            |
| 205: 6, 5-6, 8.   | 236: 1, 1-3, 2.   |













